

Seven against Thebes

CHARACTERS

ETEOCLES, son of the dead Oedipus, ruling Thebes

SCOUT, reporting from outside Thebes

CHORUS of young, unmarried women of Thebes

There are mute parts for Theban citizens, for attendants upon Eteocles, and for bearers of the dead Eteocles and his brother Polynices. (Two late and inauthentic scenes have parts for a HERALD and for ANTIGONE, sister of Eteocles, and a mute part for Ismene, a second sister.)

The play is set inside Thebes; the city is under imminent attack from forces led by the 'Seven' including Eteocles' brother Polynices. Some Theban citizens have already gathered; ETEOCLES enters from one side to make them a ruler's proclamation.

ETEOCLES. Citizens of Cadmus, the duty to say what meets the moment is the man's who keeps guard upon affairs, taking the tiller at the city's stern, with no lulling of his eyes in sleep. For were we to prosper, a god gets the thanks; if, however—may it not happen!—disaster were to occur, Eteocles would be the one man much on the city-people's lips, in constant murmurings and lamentations. May Zeus avert these from the Cadmeans' city and so prove true to his name! 5

You too have a duty now—the man still short of youthful prime 10 as well as the man past youth but greatly increasing his bodily strength—each concerned in any fitting way to aid our city and our native gods' altars, so that their due honours may never be

obliterated, and to aid our children, and Mother Earth, our dearest 15
 nurse. For she it is who accepted the whole labour of your upbringing,
 when you came to her as new children, and on her kindly soil
 she bred you to found homes and to bear weapons faithfully for
 our present need. 20

And now up to this day the god has inclined the scale favourably;
 already during the time we have been besieged inside the walls,
 our success in fighting has come for the most part from the gods;
 but now, as the seer states, the husbander of birds who hears and
 ponders their prophetic omens in his mind without help of fire,
 his art unerring—this master of such divination speaks of a very 25
 great Achaean attack being planned against the city and debated
 last night.

Quickly now, all of you, to the battlements and our walls' gates!
 Hurry with all your weapons, man the breastworks, and take your 30
 stand on the tower platforms; stay by the gates' outlets in good
 heart, and do not fear the throng of outside attackers too much:
 the god will end things well! 35

(The Theban citizens leave by one side.)

For my part, I sent scouts and spies upon their army, who I trust
 were not slow on their way. When I have heard from them, it is
 impossible I shall be caught by any trickery.

The SCOUT enters from the other side with news.

SCOUT. Eteocles, most mighty lord of the Cadmeans, I come with
 sure reports of the army outside; for I have spied upon its actions 40
 myself.

Seven men, captains furious for war, were cutting a bull's throat
 into a black shield; they touched their hands to the bull's blood
 while they swore oaths by Ares, Enyo, and blood-thirsty Terror that 45
 they would either sack the Cadmeans' town by force and raze their
 city, or die and mix their blood with this soil. They hung memor-
 ial tokens of themselves on Adrastus' chariot, for their parents at 50
 home, while weeping tears; but there was no pity at all on their
 lips, for a spirit of iron determination breathed in them, like lions
 with war in their eyes.

My news of this is not delayed by sloth, for I left them drawing
 lots how each was to lead a company against the gates which fell 55
 to him. Therefore marshal the city's best and choicest men at the
 gates' outlets, speedily: the Argives' host is already nearing in full
 armour, stirring up the dust; and white lather dripping from their 60
 horses' lungs flecks the ground. And you now, like a ship's good
 helmsman, must make the city safe, before the blasts of War shatter
 it; their army is a wave roaring on dry land. Seize the soonest
 moment for this! Myself, I'll keep my eye on trusty look-out, for 65
 what's left of the day; and through my clear report you'll know what
 happens outside, and be unharmed.

(*The SCOUT leaves; ETEOCLES is again alone.*)

ETEOCLES. O Zeus, and Earth, and you gods who hold the city, and
 you Curse, my father's powerful Fury, do not, I beg you, raze the 70
 city root and branch in total destruction, a captive of Greek foes. 72
 The land and city of Cadmus are free: never hold them in the bonds 74
 of slavery, but be our defence! I speak of our common interest, I 75
 hope; for when a city prospers, it honours its gods.

*ETEOCLES leaves by the side, to go to the walls. The CHORUS of young
 unmarried women enters from the other side, moving and singing to
 an irregular rhythm indicative of panic.*

CHORUS [*text missing*] I cry out in a great agony of fear.

Their army is let loose, it has left its camp;
 a great host is streaming here, horsemen running at its front; 80
 dust high as heaven, plain to see, convinces me,
 a messenger without voice, but clear and true; 82
 the plains beaten by hooves bring their noise to my ear; 84
 it flies in the air, it roars like irresistible water 85
 striking a mountain.

O you gods and goddesses,
 avert the rising evil!

[*a word missing*] shouts over the walls;
 the host with bright shields sets out, 90
 clear to see in its swift march [*a word missing*] on the city.
 Who then will save it, who then protect it,

among gods or goddesses?
 And myself: should I fall in supplication 95
 at our gods' [ancestral] images?
 You blessed ones in your fine temples:
 the hour has come to cling to your images; why do we delay and
 lament so much?
 Do you hear, or do you not hear, the clash of shields? 100
 [When,] when if not now shall we have [need
 to throw] prayerful offerings of robes and garlands round you?
 I have seen the clashing; there is the rattle of many spears.
 What will you do, Ares ancient in the land—
 will you betray your own city? 105
 God of the golden helmet, have an eye, have an eye for the city
 you once counted well worthy of your love.

The CHORUS now turn to set dancing and singing.

You gods of city and land, come to us, all of you together; Str. 1
 see this band of maidens
 in supplication against enslavement. 110
 A wave of men round the city, helmet-crests slanting,
 rises and seethes with the War-god's blast. 115
 Now, O Zeus our father, with whom lies the outcome of all,
 do all you can to ward off capture by our foes!
 The Argives have the citadel of Cadmus 120
 encircled; we fear the war of their weapons;
 the bits which are bound through the mouth
 of their horses pipe tones of death.
 Seven leaders of men, conspicuous 125
 amid their host in spearmen's panoply, take stand each
 at the seven gates, as their lot fell.

And you, daughter of Zeus, in your might, in your love Ant. 1
 of battle,
 be our city's rescue, 130
 Pallas! And you lord of horses too, ruler
 of ocean, (*words missing*) with your wrought fish-spear,
 give us release from our fears, release! 135
 And you, Ares progenitor, protect our citadel

named for Cadmus, and manifest your care for it!
 And Cypris, you are the race's foremother: 140
 keep danger away; we are your descendants
 by blood; with prayers invoking god
 we approach you calling aloud. 145
 And you, Lycean lord, prove Lycean
 toward the host of our foes, while you, O maiden child
 of Leto, have your bow well prepared!

(sobbing their fear)

I hear the chariots' clatter round the city— Str. 2
 O mistress Hera!— 152
 laden axles squealing at the hubs.
 Beloved Artemis!
 The spears as they are brandished are driving the air mad! 155
 How is it with our city? What is to happen?
 Where has god yet to lead the outcome?

(sobbing their fear)

Stones hail upon our battlements from slingers. Ant. 1
 O dear Apollo!— 160
 shields of bronze are clashing at the gates!
 You son of Zeus who have
 the sacred power to ordain war's outcome in battle,
 and you, blessed Queen Onca Outside the City,
 save our abode and its seven gates! 165

O you all-sufficient gods, Str. 3
 O you gods and goddesses with power
 to guard our land and walls,
 do not betray them in the toil of war
 to an army with a foreign tongue. 170
 Hear these maidens' entreaties, hear them very well,
 as they stretch out their hands.

O beloved deities, Ant. 3
 stand over and deliver our land; 175
 show that you hold it dear!
 Let the people's offerings concern you,
 and protect them out of that concern.

This too: our city's rites are fond of sacrifice; 180
be mindful, we beg you!

ETEOCLES *re-enters angrily from the side; he has heard the CHORUS' panic.*

ETEOCLES. You intolerable creatures! I ask you: is this best for the city and its safety, and does it give heart to its people here under siege, that you go falling before the images of gods who hold the city, and howling, keening—things hateful to sensible 185
minds? May I share my house with women and their sex neither amid bad times nor in precious prosperity: when they have sway, there's no living with their audacity, and once they are afraid, they are more trouble for house and city. And so now, with your 190
running around to escape, your noise has spread an evil lack of heart among our citizens, while you give the enemies' cause outside the best possible support; and our ruin is coming from within ourselves. This is what you will get when you live among 195
women!

So, if any person will not obey my rule—man, woman, and anything between—sentence will be determined for their execution; and there will be no escape from death by public stoning. What lies outside the house is a man's concern—let a woman give no advice: 200
you are to stay indoors and cause no harm. (*pausing for the Chorus to respond*) Do you hear me, or not hear me? Or am I speaking to the deaf?

The CHORUS' unabated fear moves them to further song and dance; Eteocles interposes further calming speech.

CHORUS. O beloved son of Oedipus, I became afraid Str. 1
after I heard the chariots' clatter sounding, sounding
as hubs screeched with the turning wheels 205
and the horses' harness gave out a voice
from the parts through their mouth, bits born in the fire.

ETEOCLES. Well, does a sailor who flees from the stern to the prow find a means of safety when his ship labours in the ocean-wave? 210

CHORUS. But it was the ancient images I ran to approach, Ant. 1
putting my trust in their deities, when the blizzard
of death roared in storm at the gates;

it was then that my fear roused me to pray
for the blessed gods' strength to shelter us here. 215

ETEOCLES. Do you pray that the walls keep out the enemy's war?
Then this will be to the gods' advantage; yet, men say, the gods of a
captured city forsake it.

CHORUS. May these our assembled gods never leave it Str. 2
while life is mine; nor may I see this city 220
overrun street by street and consumed
by flame from an army of foes!

ETEOCLES. Do not be ill-advised, I beg you, when you invoke the
gods; for there is Obedience, mother of Well-being, wife of the
Saver—so goes the saying.

CHORUS. There is; but god has a strength far superior: Ant. 2
often it sets the man helpless in trouble
upright, and even free of hardship
when the clouds hang over his eyes.

ETEOCLES. Men's part is this, to offer the gods victims in sacrifice
and for divination when testing their enemy; your part, however, is 230
to be silent, and to stay inside the house.

CHORUS. Thanks to the gods the city we live in is still unvan-
quished; Str. 3
its wall keeps off the mass of foes.
How can you be angry with us, how detest us? 235

ETEOCLES. I do not take amiss your honouring the family of gods,
but, so that you do not make cowards of our citizens, stay calm and
do not be too fearful.

CHORUS. When I had heard the clatter and the shouts flying
towards me, Ant. 3
I came in fear and great dread 240
here to the citadel, the gods' seat of honour.

ETEOCLES. Should you hear, then, of men killed or wounded, do
not seize on that for shrill lament; for this is Ares' nourishment, the
blood of men.

The CHORUS are at last calmer, and change to speech.

- CHORUS. But there! I hear horses neighing! 245
- ETEOCLES. If you do hear them, do not hear them too clearly.
- CHORUS. The citadel is groaning from the earth, as men encircle it.
- ETEOCLES. So? It is enough if I deliberate about that.
- CHORUS. I am afraid: the crashing at the gates increases.
- ETEOCLES. Will you not be silent? Say nothing of this through the city! 250
- CHORUS. O you gods our partners, do not betray the walls!
- ETEOCLES. Damnation take you—can you not bear to be silent?
- CHORUS. Gods of our city, grant I do not meet with slavery!
- ETEOCLES. You're making your own slavery, and mine, and the whole city's.
- CHORUS. Almighty Zeus, turn your bolt upon our foes! 255
- ETEOCLES. O Zeus, what you have bestowed on us in women, as a kind!
- CHORUS. One to endure misery—just like men whose city is taken.
- ETEOCLES. Words of ill omen again, while you are touching the images?
- CHORUS. It is lack of courage; fear ran away with my tongue.
- ETEOCLES. I beg you: grant me if you will a small favour. 260
- CHORUS. Name it quickly, please, and I'll quickly know.
- ETEOCLES. Be silent, you wretch: don't frighten your friends!
- CHORUS. I'm silent; with others I'll suffer what is fated.
- ETEOCLES. I prefer your last words to those earlier. And, furthermore: go away from the images; make this better prayer, for the gods to be our allies, and when you have heard my prayers too, then raise the sacred chant for victory, with good heart, and follow the Greek custom of crying out over sacrifice, an encouragement for friends, releasing them from war's fear. (*the CHORUS begin to move to the orkhêstra*) 265 270
- I say to the gods who hold land and city, those who both inhabit our plains and watch over our marketplace, and to Dirce's springs and the water of Ismenus, that if good success attends us and the city is saved, we will bloody the gods' hearths with sheep, 275 and set up trophies over the enemy, and dedicate our foes' spear-struck armour as spoil in their holy temples. Make vows like these to the gods, not with the lamentations you love, and not amid 277

useless and wild sobbing; you'll have no greater escape from what is 280
fated.

As for me, I will go and post six men, with myself as seventh, to oppose our enemies in proud style at the walls' seven gates, before words come as hurried messengers, noisy in their haste, and set all ablaze from urgency. 285

ETEOCLES *again leaves by the side. The CHORUS are now in the orkhêstra to sing and dance.*

| | | |
|---------|--|--------|
| CHORUS. | I do care, but my heart is sleepless | Str. 1 |
| | with fear; anxieties which are my heart's neighbours | |
| | inflame my dread of this host | |
| | surrounding our wall, | 290 |
| | just as snakes, grimmest of bedmates, | |
| | are feared by a trembling dove, in dread | |
| | for its nestling young. | |
| | Some of that host are approaching our walls | 295 |
| | in all their force, in all their mass— | |
| | and what is to happen to me?— | |
| | while others are slinging | |
| | jagged stones, a hailstorm | |
| | against our townsmen assaulted on all sides. | 300 |
| | In every way that you can, | |
| | gods born of Zeus, protect our city, | |
| | and its people born of Cadmus! | |

| | |
|---|--------|
| What country and soil better than this | Ant. 1 |
| will you take in exchange, once you have forsaken | 305 |
| this land of deep earth to foes, | |
| and Dirce's river, | |
| the most enriching of waters | |
| let flow by Poseidon, lord of land, | 310 |
| and Tethys' daughters? | |
| O you gods holding our city, visit | |
| therefore on those outside the walls | |
| the cowardice fatal to men, | |
| their weapons thrown away | 315 |
| as blind ruin takes them. | |

Ensure battle's glory for our townsmen,
 and [be] this city's saviours;
 stay firmly where you have noble shrines;
 hear our tearful, shrill entreaties. 320

A cause for pity's tears it is, to hurl a city Str. 2
 so age-old down headlong to Hades,
 enslaved as the prey of war, in dust and ash
 if an Achaean man sacks it
 with god's will, in dishonour, 325
 its women overpowered and led away (*a sobbing wail*),
 both young and old,
 by their hair like horses, their garments
 torn apart on them. A city
 being emptied cries out, 330
 its women lost as pillage, their shrieking all mingled.
 Heavy indeed is the fate I dread.

A cause for weeping tears it is that girls just of age Ant. 2
 should be plucked unripe before marriage
 to travel a hateful road, their homes destroyed; 335
 in truth, I declare a dead man
 to fare better than they do.
 For whenever some city is overcome (*a sobbing wail*),
 its fate is harsh:
 man leads man away, another kills, 340
 others carry fire; the city
 is all smoke and foul stain.
 Ares the slayer of people blasts madly against it,
 polluting all piety's restraint.

Uproar through the city; against it a net Str. 3
 encircling the walls; and man killing 346
 man (*a word missing*) with spear;
 new-born infants
 suckling at the breast
 are wailing and screaming in their own blood. 350
 Plundering too, the kin of rampage:
 looter joins with looter,

and empty-handed calls to empty-handed
 from wishing to gain a companion,
 though he desires neither less nor equal; 355
 to picture what follows, words are to hand.

All manner of produce is thrown on the ground, Ant. 3
 offending the eye, once it falls in
 with vindictive storemen.
 Earth's great bounty, 360
 all randomly mixed,
 is carried along by the surge and spoiled.
 New women-slaves encounter fresh hurt,
 wretchedly enduring
 the bed of a man who has fortune's success, 365
 since from their enemy's supremacy
 they must expect nocturnal rites to come
 where all is a surge of weeping and pain.

The CHORUS turn to speech as the SCOUT returns, followed very quickly from the other side by ETEOCLES, who has attendants.

CHORUS. (*first voice*) See, my friends, our spy on their army brings
 us, I think, important new information; haste wheels his steps 370
 along on their errand.

CHORUS. (*second voice*) And look, here is the king himself, Oedi-
 pus' son, exactly in time to learn the messenger's report; haste 375
 disorders his steps too.

SCOUT. I'll speak, by your leave; I've good knowledge of the enemy
 and how each of them has drawn his lot at the gates.

Tydeus is already at the Gates of Proetus, roaring; but the seer
 does not let him ford the crossing of the Ismenus, for the sacrificial
 victims give no good omen. Tydeus in his frenzied lust for battle 380
 is loud as a snake with its midday hissing; he strikes at the seer,
 the wise son of Oicles, with abuse that he slinks fawningly before
 death and battle, out of cowardice. While he bawls out like this,
 he shakes the three overshadowing plumes which crest his helmet, 385
 and under his shield of hammered bronze bells ring out terror. On
 the shield he has this arrogant device, the heaven wrought blazing
 with stars; brilliant and conspicuous in mid-shield is the full moon,

most reverend of stars, the eye of night. Raving like this in his 390
vainglorious armour he bawls out beside the river-banks, longing
for battle, like a horse snorting fiercely against its bridle, eager to
go while awaiting the trumpet's cry.

Whom will you post against him? Who can be relied upon to
stand defending the Gates of Proetus when the bars are undone? 395

ETEOCLES. No fine array on a man would frighten me! Nor do
devices cause wounds; plumes and bells do not bite home without a
spear. This night you speak of, too, set upon his shield and glitter- 400
ing with the heaven's stars—its folly might perhaps be prophetic
for someone; for were night to fall upon his eyes in death, this
vainglorious device would indeed prove right and true in meaning
for its bearer, and its arrogance will be his own prophecy against 405
him. For my part, I shall post as defender of these gates against
Tydeus the trusty son of Astacus, a man of very noble birth who
honours the throne of Modesty and abhors over-proud words. He 410
has no part in shameful acts, and his habit is to be no coward. His
roots spring from the Sown Men whom Ares spared, and he is truly
a native of the land: Melanippus. Ares will decide the action with
his dice; but the Justice of blood-kin very much sends him forward 415
to keep enemy spears from the motherland which bore him.

The CHORUS sing and dance briefly.

CHORUS. Now may the gods grant success for our champion,
Str. 1

justly setting out to fight for our city;
but I do tremble for our friends, 420
in fear to see their bloody death
if it comes to killing.

SCOUT. May the gods grant him this success!

Capaneus has drawn the lot at the Electran Gates. This next man
is a giant, taller than the one I spoke of before, and his boastful
thinking is not a mortal man's: for he will sack the city, he says, 425
both if god be willing and if not willing, and Zeus' opposition with 426
a blast that strikes to the earth is not to stop him—he likened Zeus'
flashing bolts of lightning to the warmth of midday. As his device 430

he has a naked man bearing fire, a torch blazing in his hands as his weapon; in letters of gold he is crying out 'I shall burn the city!'

Against such a man, send . . . who will stand against him? Who 435
will stay there without fear of the man's boasting?

ETEOCLES. Here too one gain gives birth to another. Men's
tongues, I tell you, are the true accusing evidence of their wild
thoughts. Capaneus is threatening those prepared to act; in his 440
contempt for the gods and wild delight in his well-practised
mouth, although he is a mortal man, he sends Zeus in heaven
loud and swelling words. I trust, however, that the lightning-
bolt of fire will come to him, not any likeness of it. A man has 445
been posted against him whose mouth may be too ready but who
burns with courage, mighty Polyphontes, a protection to be relied 447
upon, with the goodwill of Artemis the defender, and the other
gods' aid. 450

Speak of another man who has drawn the lot at another gate.

CHORUS. Death to the man for his proud imprecations Ant. 1
on our city! May the lightning-bolt check him
before he bursts into my home
and drags me from the maidens' rooms
in war's brutal ransack. 456

SCOUT. Speak I shall: third was Eteoclus, with the third lot leaping 458
from the upturned bronze helmet for him to pitch his company
against the Neisteid Gates. He keeps his horses circling; they snort 460
in their headbands, in their wish to fall upon the gates; the muzzle-
pipes whistle in barbaric fashion as they fill with their nostrils'
proud breath. His shield's device is formed in no modest fashion: 465
a man in armour climbs the steps of a ladder against his enemies'
wall, in his wish to storm it; and he too cries out in lettered syllables,
that not even Ares would throw him from the battlements.

For this man too send one who can be relied upon to keep 470
slavery's yoke from our city. 471

ETEOCLES. He is already sent, in fact; and his boast consists in his
two hands: Megareus, offspring of Creon of the Sown Men's race. 473
With no fear at all of the horses' whinnying and din he will go out 475
from the gates, and either repay the land fully for his upbringing

by his death, or take the two men, and the city on the shield, and glorify his father's house with these spoils.

Go on with the boasts of a further man; and don't grudge me the telling. 480

CHORUS. And I here pray that you may have good success, Str. 2
you champion of my house!—but that ill success befalls the other
side;
and just as they speak against our city
too boastfully in their minds' madness,
so may Zeus the punisher look upon them in wrath. 485

SCOUT. Fourth and next, his place the gates which neighbour
Athena Onca, Hippomedon stands shouting, huge in form and
stature. The great orb he holds—I mean the round of his shield—
I trembled as he flourished it; I will not deny it. It was no cheap 490
maker of devices, seemingly, who bestowed this work upon his
shield, Typhon issuing through his fire-breathing mouth the black
smoke which is fire's changeful sister; and coiling snakes are riv-
eted at the lip running round his hollow-bellied shield. Hippome- 495
don himself cried out triumphantly; possessed by Ares he rushes
towards battle like a frenzied maenad, looking terror.

Such a man's attack must be well defended: Terror is already
boasting at the gates. 500

ETEOCLES. First, Pallas Onca the city-gates' close neighbour will
keep the man off in hatred of his arrogance, like a fierce serpent
kept from nestlings; and Hyperbius, the trusty son of Oenops, is
chosen to fight him man to man: he wishes to seek out his destiny 505
in the stress of fortune. In neither form nor heart nor bearing of
arms is he to be faulted. Hermes has brought them together with
good reason, for the man is enemy to the man he will stand against,
and in the gods upon their shields the two will be bringing enemies
together: the first has fire-breathing Typhon, while for Hyperbius 510
father Zeus is set standing upright on his shield, thunderbolt blaz-
ing in hand. That is the nature of these gods' friendship; and we 513 515
are on the victorious side, and they on the vanquished, at least if
Zeus is mightier in battle than Typhon; and it is probable, the men 517
will fare like this as opponents; and for Hyperbius, in accord with 519

his device's meaning, Zeus there upon his shield should prove the 518
saviour. 520

CHORUS. Indeed I trust that he who has on his shield Ant. 2
the inimical figure of Zeus' antagonist, the evil power
now under the earth, a semblance hateful
to both mortals and the long-lived gods—
I trust that in front of the gates he'll smash his head down. 525

SCOUT. I wish it may be so! The fifth man is the next I speak of,
and the fifth gates are his post, the Borraean, by the very tomb of
Zeus' son Amphion. He swears by the spear he holds—he reveres 530
it with his trust more than a god and higher than his eyes—he
swears he will sack the Cadmeans' city by force. So declares Ares'
son of the handsome face, his mother the frequenter of mountains,
a man both boy and man; the beard is just coming across his
cheeks in youth's prime growth, its hair springing up thickly. Cruel 535
in spirit, in no way girlish like his name, but with a fierce eye,
he takes his stand. Not that he stands against the gate without a
boast: on his shield of hammered bronze, his body's rounded pro-
tection, he was brandishing that reproach to our city, the Sphinx 540
who ate men raw, artfully worked on with rivets, her embossed
figure gleaming; she carries beneath her a single Cadmean, for
the most missiles to strike upon this man. Now he has come, it
seems, to do no petty trafficking in battle, and not to disgrace his 545
long road's journey. He is Parthenopaeus the Arcadian. Such is this
man, an immigrant to Argos who repays it for his fine upbringing
by threatening these walls with what I wish the god may not
fulfil.

ETEOCLES. If only they get from the gods what they intend with 550
those unholy boastings! They would be destroyed, for sure, all in
ruin and in all misery. This Arcadian you speak of—for him too
there is a man, one who does not boast but whose hand sees to
the deed, Actor, brother of the last I named. He will not allow talk 555
without deeds to stream inside our gates and make disaster grow,
nor that hateful monster the Sphinx to pass in from outside. She 558
will blame her bearer when she gets constant battering under the 560
city's wall.

If the gods will it, I should prove right!

- CHORUS. His words go through my breast; Str. 3
 and my hair in its locks is standing on end
 as I hear great boasting from boastful, impious men; 565
 If gods are gods,
 I wish they may destroy them in our land!
- SCOUT. The sixth I would speak of is a man most prudent, a seer
 excellent in valour, mighty Amphiaraus. By the Homoloid Gates
 he has his post, and he is shouting much abuse at mighty Tydeus, 570
 with 'Slayer of men! Confounder of cities! Supreme teacher of
 evil to Argos! Fury's Summoner! Servant of Slaughter! Counsellor
 of Adrastus in this wrong!' Next he addresses and calls to your 575
 brother, mighty Polynices, his eyes turned up in contempt, at the
 end dwelling twice on his name. These words pass his lips in
 speech: 'Can such a deed be welcome also to the gods, and good for 580
 future generations to hear and tell, the sack of your father's city and
 native gods after pitching against them an army of outsiders? What
 lawful cause will quench the life-source of a mother, any more than 585
 your fatherland will become your ally if your eager purpose is to
 capture it in war? I myself, on the contrary, shall enrich this land,
 a seer covered by an enemy's soil. To battle, then! I expect a death
 of no dishonour.' So the seer declared, untroubled as he bore his 590
 shield all of bronze. No device was on its round, however; his wish
 is not the appearance of prowess but its reality, for he crops the
 deep furrow from which good counsel grows. Against this man I
 urge sending wise and brave opponents: the man who honours god 595
 is dangerous.
- ETEOCLES. Ominous, alas, to ally a righteous man with those too
 impious! In every undertaking there is nothing worse than evil
 company; it is a crop not to be taken in. Either a pious man, who 600
 joins on board a ship sailors hot upon some villainy, is lost together 602
 with a breed of men the gods abhor, or a righteous man, among
 fellow-citizens who are hostile to guests and unmindful of the gods, 605
 is caught unjustly in the same net and beaten down by the god's
 impartial scourge. In this same way the seer, the son of Oicles, I
 mean, a prudent, upright, valorous, reverent man, a great prophet, 610
 mixed despite his judgement with unholy, bold-mouthed men who
 stretch their mission too far to return; Zeus willing, he shall be
 dragged down with them. Yet I think he will not even attack the 615

gates, not from lack of heart or cowardice of spirit, but he knows that he must die in the battle if Apollo's oracles are to have their fruit; for the god's habit is to be silent or to say what hits the mark. Nevertheless we shall put a good man against him to guard the gate, mighty Lasthenes, an enemy to outsiders. Nature gives him an old man's wisdom in a body prime with youthful growth; his eye runs swift; he is not slow of hand to seize with his spear on what a shield leaves exposed at its side. Yet men's success is the gift of god.

CHORUS. You gods, hear and fulfil
our just prayer, so our city may have success;
turn evil war's harm away onto its attackers.
Outside our walls
may Zeus with his lightning strike and kill them!

SCOUT. Here now is the seventh man I shall speak of, at the seventh gates, your very own brother, and here is the kind of fortune he invokes with curses for the city, crying out joyously a victory-hymn for its capture: for yourself to be his opponent and for himself to kill you and to die close by, or to punish you with living exile in the very same way as you dishonoured him with expulsion. Those are the things he is bawling, and he calls upon the gods of his birth and fatherland to keep absolute watch over his prayers—the mighty Polynices. He has a newly finished shield, a perfect round, and a double device worked on to it: a man of beaten gold seen in full armour, and a woman modestly leading him as guide; in fact, she says she is Justice, as the letters state: 'I shall bring this man back home, and he will possess his father's city and the freedom of his house.'

Those have been the devices these men invented; and you yourself must now decide, whom you think to send against Polynices. You can be sure, you will never fault me for my reports here; but you yourself must decide how to steer the city's course.

(*The SCOUT leaves.*)

ETEOCLES. Oh, the family of Oedipus, and mine, maddened by the gods, and their great detestation, and all the tears to shed for it!

Oh, alas for me, now my father's curses are brought to fulfilment! 655
 Yet neither tears nor sorrow is fitting, in case they give birth to
 grief even harder to bear. This man so well named, Polynices I
 mean—we shall soon know where his device will have its fulfil-
 ment, whether letters wrought in gold, the wittering of wandering 660
 wits, are to bring him back home. If Justice the maiden daughter
 of Zeus had attended his actions and thoughts, this might perhaps
 now be so; but neither when he escaped from the darkness of his
 mother's womb, nor during his upbringing, nor since his youth, 665
 nor when the hair gathered in his beard, did Justice look on him
 and find him worthy; nor yet, I swear, does she stand at his side to
 support him now while he injures his fatherland. In truth, Justice
 would be wholly false in name if she kept company with a man 670
 minded for every audacity. Of this I am confident, and I will stand
 against him myself; who else can do so more justly? Leader against
 leader and brother against brother, enemy against enemy, I will take
 my stand.

(*to his attendants*) Bring my greaves at once, protection against 675
 spear and arrow! (*One or two attendants leave.*)

CHORUS. No! Dearest of men, Oedipus' son, do not be like that
 ill-named one in nature! It is enough that Cadmeans fight hand to
 hand with Argives; their bloodshed can be cleansed, but the death 680
 of two men who are blood-kin killing each other like this—there is
 no old age for this pollution.

ETEOCLES. If someone really were to bring this evil on, let it be
 without disgrace: it is the only profit among the dead; you'll not
 speak of any glory from cowardice and shame. 685

CHORUS. (*singing and dancing*) Why this raging desire, my son?
 Let no mad ruin bear you away, Str. 1
 filling your heart with war's frenzy; cast out
 this evil love at its start.

ETEOCLES. Since a god very much hurries the business on, let the
 whole line of Laius detested by Apollo go along with the wind now 690
 that Cocytus' wave is its lot.

CHORUS. Desire all too raw with its bite is urging you forward to
 perform Ant. 1

a man's killing in unlawful bloodshed
which will bear its bitter fruit.

ETEOCLES. It is because my own father's black curse is my enemy; 695
it sits nearby with dry, unweeping eyes, speaking of earlier death as
profit over later.

CHORUS. But do not yourself press on! You will not be called
Str. 2
ignoble if you secure your life well;
the Fury cloaked in black storm will go out of the house 700
once the gods get your hands' sacrifice.

ETEOCLES. The gods are already past caring for me, it would seem,
and the favour they prize from me is my death. Why then should I
still fawn to avoid my fated death?

CHORUS. Wait while it stands at your side, since in a late veer
Ant. 2
of its mood the divine power might perhaps 706
be changeable and come on more gently with its breath;
but the storm is still boiling now.

ETEOCLES. It boiled up, yes, in Oedipus' curse. The sights I imag-
ined asleep in my dreams were all too true, in their division of my 710
father's wealth.

CHORUS. Let women persuade you, although you have no love for
them.

ETEOCLES. You may speak, where it is to effect; but it must not be
at length.

CHORUS. Don't take this road to the seventh gates—not you!

ETEOCLES. I am whetted now, you can see, and you will not blunt
me by any argument. 715

CHORUS. Yet victory has the god's honour, even if ignobly won.

ETEOCLES. No man of arms should love that saying.

CHORUS. But is it your wish to reap a crop from your own brother's
blood?

ETEOCLES. If the gods give it, you can't escape evil.

ETEOCLES *leaves by the side for the gates, his attendants following.*
 The CHORUS *dance and sing.*

| | | |
|--|--------|-----|
| CHORUS. I shudder that the goddess | Str. 1 | |
| unlike gods, the destroyer of houses, | | 721 |
| the wholly true prophet of evil | | |
| invoked by a father, the Fury, | | |
| may fulfil the impassioned curses | | |
| of the demented Oedipus; | | 725 |
| this strife destroying sons drives her. | | |
| A stranger is assigning | Ant. 1 | |
| the portions, Chalybian emigrant | | |
| from Scythia, bitter divider | | |
| of wealth and possessions, cruel Iron, | | 730 |
| granting land enough to inhabit | | |
| for just the dead to occupy, | | |
| without a share in these great plains. | | |
| Once they have killed each other, | Str. 2 | |
| have hewn each other to death, and dusty earth | | 735 |
| has drunk the bloody gore down, hard and black, | | |
| who is to give expiation? who provide them with release? | | |
| Oh, how the harsh new sufferings | | |
| of this house mingle closely with its ancient woe! | | 740 |
| Of the ancient transgression | Ant. 2 | |
| I speak, its penalty swift; and it remains | | |
| to the third generation, ever since, | | 745 |
| despite Pythian Apollo in his seat of oracles, | | |
| the world's navel, thrice telling him | | |
| to save his city by dying without issue, | | |
| Laius was conquered by pleasing folly | Str. 3 | |
| and got for a son his own death, | | 751 |
| the father-killing Oedipus, | | |
| who sowed his seed in his mother's | | |
| sacred tilth where he had grown, | | |
| a root yielding bloodshed— | | 755 |

foolhardy! Insanity from wits destroyed
coupled them in marriage;

like the sea it drives on waves of trouble: Ant. 3
one falls but another rises
of triple greatness, crashing too 760
around the city's stern. Between,
here is our wall extending
defence of narrow width;
but I fear the city may be overwhelmed
together with its kings. 765

When curses spoken long ago are fulfilled, Str. 4
the settlement is harsh;
their destructiveness does not slip away.
The prosperity of mortal men
when fattened to excess 770
must jettison all from the stern.

For who of men had such esteem from the gods Ant. 4
that share the altars here,
and from men frequent in their gatherings,
as the honour they gave Oedipus 775
who removed from the land
that bane, the snatcher of our men?

But when the wretch was fully conscious Str. 5
of his dreadful marriage,
distraught with grief and rage past bearing, 780
and madness in his heart,
at the two evil acts he had performed
with hands that slew his father, he went
astray from better judgement:

against his sons, in vengeful anger Ant. 5
they had not sustained him, 786
he launched, alas, embittered curses,
they should one day divide
his possessions with swords of iron in hand;

and now I fear this may be fulfilled 790
by the swift-running Fury.

The SCOUT arrives from the battle at the gates.

SCOUT. Take heart, you daughters of noble parentage! Our city has
escaped slavery's yoke: the boastings of high and mighty men are
overthrown; amid both calm and the storm's mighty blows the city 795
has let in no water. The wall holds firm, and we secured our gates
with reliable single champions. Mostly, things go well, at six of
the gates; the seventh was chosen by that holy leader of all sevens 800
the lord Apollo, fulfilling for Oedipus' sons the ancient folly of
Laius.

CHORUS. What further unwelcome trouble is there for the city? 803

MESSENGER. The men are dead, slain by their own hands. 805

CHORUS Who? What do you mean? Fear at your words puts me
out of my senses.

MESSENGER. Come to your senses then, and listen: Oedipus'
sons...

CHORUS. Oh, this is misery for me: I am our disaster's prophet.

MESSENGER. ...yes, there is no doubt: felled to the ground...

CHORUS. ...they both lie there? Heavy news, but tell it all the same. 810

MESSENGER. They went to kill themselves this way with hands too
closely kin in blood; both together had the demon in common—
indeed it is this which has consumed the ill-fated family. Such
things as these are for joy and tears, with the city faring well but
those at the head, the two commanders, dividing their whole prop- 815
erty and possessions with a hammered, Scythian sword; they will
have what land they may get at their burial, borne along in a cruel
fate according to their father's prayers. 819

The SCOUT leaves.

CHORUS. (*chanting*) O great Zeus and you deities 822
guarding our city, you whose [concern it was]

to protect these walls of Cadmus,

am I to rejoice and cry victory 825

at the city's safety unscathed,

or weep for the cruelly fated sufferers,

the commanders in war who leave no children,
 who were indeed rightly named
 ['of true glory'] and 'of much contention' 830
 and killed in their impious purpose?

(*The CHORUS now sing and dance.*)

Oh, the black curse of Oedipus upon his line, Str. 1
 now complete in fulfilment!
 Chill misery has fallen round
 my heart; I begin a chant for the tomb, 835
 possessed by grief on hearing they are killed, bodies
 dripping with blood, an evil death their fate;
 an evil omen,
 truly, two spears piping music as one!

There has been exaction in full, with no failing, Ant. 1
 by the father's spoken curse; 841
 Laius' disobedient resolve
 had lasting effect; around the city
 there is despair; the oracles are unblunted.
 Oh, we lament you men greatly; your act 845
 was beyond belief;
 the blow is here to mourn, and no mere tale.

The CHORUS see bearers approaching with the bodies of Eteocles and Polynices, which are put down in the orkhêstra.

Here things are, they make themselves plain; the messenger's report
 was very clear. Mesode 1
 Double, grievous blows bring double sorrows.
 These are disasters fulfilled in two deaths, mutual slaughter! What
 am I to say? 850
 What else is there but agony upon agony at the hearth?
 Come though, my friends, go along with the wind of grief,
 and with hands around your head 855
 beat out its escorting rhythm which passes ever across Acheron,
 steering the mission
 of no return, its canvas black,

to the dry shore which Healer Apollo may not tread,
 sunless, where all are received into dark invisibility. 860

(*The following brief scene is inauthentic.*)

{{But here are Antigone and Ismene
 for a bitterly painful task:
 without disputing, I think,
 they will lament their two brothers from their lovely bosoms,
 dressed in deep folds; the event well merits sorrow. 865
 It is right that before their voices start
 we cry the ill-sounding hymn
 of the Fury and intone
 the hateful paean to Hades.

Oh, sorrow! They have suffered the worst in their brothers 870
 of all who pass a breast-band round their dress!
 I weep, I lament, and there is no deceit:
 I truly wail from the heart.}}

The CHORUS now divide, to dance and sing.

SEMI-CHORUS A. Oh, sorrow! Oh, you men were senseless, Str. 2
 disobeying friends, unwearying in wrong, 875
 destroying your father's house, you wretches, with your fight!
 SEMI-CHORUS B. Wretches indeed, and they found a wretched
 death
 in working the house's violent ruin.

A. Oh, sorrow! Oh, you men who smashed down Ant. 2
 the walls of your house, who saw the bitter cost 882
 of single rule! Now you have been reconciled through the sword. 885

B. Only too well was that outcome brought about
 by Oedipus their father's potent Fury.

A. Through their left sides they were struck, Str. 3
 struck, I tell you—the sides
 of brothers from one womb 890
 (*a line missing*)
 Oh, lament their curse sent by god,
 oh, lament their deaths by mutual killing!

- B. A piercing blow, you say, they were struck 895
to house and bodies,
through their unspeaking anger,
fated by their father's curse
to unity of purpose.
- A. Lament goes through the city; Ant. 3
the walls lament, the soil 901
laments for men it loved.
The property remains for successors,
through which came their terrible fate,
through which came their quarrel and death as its end. 905
- B. They split the possessions, tempers keen
to get equal parts;
but the arbiter they had
was not blameless to their friends,
nor Ares to their pleasure. 910
- A. Struck by iron, they are here like this, Str. 4
and struck by iron are certain shares—
one might say—awaiting them
in the tombs of their fathers.
- B. Loud-sounding lament escorts them 915
from the house, rending
in its own grief, in its own pain,
rending the senses, no friend of joy,
truly streaming tears
from a heart which wastes 920
away as I weep for these two princes.
- A. One may say of these two wretched men Ant. 4
that they inflicted much on our folk
and much on the foreign ranks,
with many slain in the fray. 925
- B. Their poor mother was ill-fated
beyond all women
who bear the name of a parent.
She made her own son her own husband
and then gave them birth; 930

| | | |
|----|--|--------------------------------|
| A. | Brothers indeed, and now wholly destroyed in a parting without friendship, their duel a madness at the end of their quarrel. | Str. 5 935 |
| B. | Their enmity has stopped; their life is now mixed in the earth running with bloodshed; truly they share one blood! Harsh the resolver of their quarrel, the sea-borne foreigner, who leapt from fire, whetted Iron; harsh too the evil divider of their property, Ares, bringing true the curse of their father! | 940 945 |
| A. | They got and keep their portion—oh, poor men!— [by] agonies the gods gave them; beneath earth's body they will have bottomless wealth. | Ant. 5 950 |
| B. | Oh, they have crowned their line with many sorrows; over the ending these Curses here have cried out in joy victory's shrill chant, now that the house and line have been routed in total flight; Ruin's trophy stands now in the gates at which they struck each other down; with both overcome, the demon has ceased. | 955 960 |
| A. | You were struck; and struck back. | Mesode 2 |
| B. | And you slew; and you died. | |
| A. | You slew with the spear. | B. You died by the spear. |
| A. | Hurt done! | B. Hurt borne! |
| A. | Let lament come! | B. Let weeping come! |
| A. | You lie in death. | B. And you dealt death. |
| | | 965 |
| A. | Cry sorrow! | B. Cry sorrow! |
| A. | My heart is mad with lamenting. | Str. 6 |
| B. | My heart within me is groaning. | |

- A. Oh, oh! You shall have all our tears!
 B. You too, your wretchedness complete! 970
 A. By your kin you died.
 B. And your kin you slew.
 A. Two to tell of... B. ...and two to see...
 A. ...these miseries are near at hand...
 B. ...the fall of brother with brother.

CHORUS (*refrain*) Oh, alas! O Fate, heavy in what you give to
 endure, 975
 and you potent shade of Oedipus,
 black Fury, you are indeed a mighty power!

- A. Cry sorrow! B. Cry sorrow! Ant. 6
 A. Disasters dreadful to look on...
 B. ...he brought from exile and showed me...
 A. ...but failed in his goal when he slew. 980
 B. City safe, but he lost life's breath!
 A. He lost it, indeed!
 B. But took away *his*! 982
 A. Deaths to tell of... B. ...and deaths to see... 993
 A. ...shared blood to lament, heavy grief! 984
 B. We weep the pain of triple blows! 985

CHORUS (*refrain*) Oh, alas! O Fate, heavy in what you give to
 endure,
 and you potent shade of Oedipus,
 black Fury, you are indeed a mighty power!

- A. (*of Polynices*) You knew her, at the end of your march... Epod.
 B. (*of Eteocles*) You too, no later in learning... 990
 A. ...when you came back to your city...
 B. ...and as antagonist to your spear. 992
 A. Oh, the agony... B. Oh, the tragedy... 994
 A. ...for the house! B. ...and the land! 995
 A. (*of Eteocles*) Oh, alas! Your lamentable tragedy, my lord! 998
 B. (*of Polynices*) (*a line missing*)
 A. Oh, alas! Their wrongdoing, their whole disaster! 1000
 B. Oh, alas! Their possession by ruinous folly!
 A. Oh, alas! Where in the land shall we lay their bodies?

B. Oh, alas! Where the honour will be greatest for them!

A. Oh, alas! Hurtful for the father they lie beside!

1004

(B. *A line missing*)

After 1004 the original ending of Aeschylus' play, perhaps only a few lines of farewell from the CHORUS as they accompany the solemn exit of the bodies, has been displaced by the following inauthentic scene.

{A HERALD from the new authorities in Thebes enters; a few citizens may now gather too, joining ANTIGONE and ISMENE.

HERALD. It is my duty to announce present and past decisions 1005
of the people's counsellors in this city of Cadmus: it is decided
that Eteocles here, in virtue of his goodwill towards the land,
should have funeral through loving burial in the earth; for he
chose death within the city in keeping out the enemy; pure and
blameless towards its ancestral temples, he died exactly where it is 1010
honourable for the young to die. About Eteocles, such words are
my instruction; but his brother, the dead Polynices here, is to be
thrown outside without funeral, for dogs to seize upon, since he
was to overturn the Cadmeans' land had not some god stood in 1015
his way with Eteocles' spear; and even in death he shall keep the
guilt of polluting his ancestral gods: he dishonoured them when
he brought an outside army and tried to take the city. So it is
decided that he should have a dishonourable funeral from the birds 1020
of the air, and this be honour's reward that he gets; no hands to
work at heaping a tomb are to accompany him, no holy attention
with shrill laments, no honour of being carried out from home
by kin.

Such is the decision of the Cadmean authorities here. 1025

ANTIGONE. And I for my part say to your Cadmean leaders: if
no one else is willing to share giving him funeral, I will give him
funeral myself and risk the danger for having given it to my own
brother; and I feel no shame in this disobedience, in defying the
city's rule. To be born as we were from a common womb, from a 1030
wretched mother and a hapless father—this is a powerful thing:
therefore, my soul, share willingly in his unwilling misery, the
living with the dead, kin in spirit with kin. His flesh (*a line missing*) 1035
nor hollow-bellied wolves shall rend: let no one think of that! His

funeral and burial I will myself find means for, although I am a woman, carrying things in the fold of my linen dress; and I myself will cover him. Let no one think the contrary: a means to act will come with courage. 1040

HERALD. I tell you not to do this violence against the city.

ANTIGONE. And I tell you not to make superfluous proclamations against me.

HERALD. A people which has escaped disaster is harsh, however.

ANTIGONE. Be harsh! But Polynices here shall not go without funeral. 1045

HERALD. But will you honour with funeral one whom the city hates?

ANTIGONE. Certainly, if he has not had full honour by the gods.

HERALD. No, he has not, at least not before he threw this land into danger.

ANTIGONE. He suffered wrongly, and answered that with wrong.

HERALD. But this was a deed against all, instead of a single man. 1050

ANTIGONE. Strife is the last of the gods to end an argument; but I will give him funeral myself. Make no long speeches!

HERALD. Follow your own will, then; but I forbid you.

The HERALD leaves. The CHORUS and the bearers divide into two groups; one with the body of Eteocles is joined by ISMENE, and the other with that of Polynices is joined by ANTIGONE. The CHORUS chant.

CHORUS A. Oh, our sorrow! O you proudly triumphant Spirits of Death,

you Furies, you annihilators of family,
who have destroyed the family of Oedipus root and branch like this! 1055

What is to become of me? and what am I to do? and what plan for myself?

How am I to bear neither weeping for you, Polynices,
nor escorting you to the tomb?

CHORUS B. But I am afraid, and I wish to avert the citizens' anger. 1060
Eteocles, you will have many honours, however,
while he, poor wretch, will go his way without lamentation,

and have only the tears of a sister's dirge.

Now, who could believe this?

1065

A. Let the city act or not act

against those who weep for Polynices.

We here will go and help his funeral as escorts.

For this is a blow we share with the family;

1070

and any city approves what is right differently at times.

B. And we shall go with Eteocles, exactly as the city

and what is right together approve;

for after the blessed gods and mighty Zeus

he, most of all, saved the Cadmeans' city

1075

from overturn and swamping

by a wave of foreign men.

The two groups with the bodies leave by opposite sides.}}

SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

THE principal medieval MS preserves most of an ancient *hypothesis* ('introduction') to the play (see on that to *Persians*, p. 130); it has been corrected with help from a fragmentary papyrus text of about 200 BC first published in 1952: 'The scene of the play is laid in Thebes, and the chorus is composed of Theban maidens. The plot is the army of Argives besieging the Thebans, who in fact are victorious, and the death of Eteocles and Polynices. It was performed during the archonship of Theagorides in the first year of the seventy-eighth Olympiad (i.e. 467 BC); Aeschylus was victorious with *Laius*, *Oedipus*, *Seven against Thebes*, and the satyric *Sphinx*.'

Most MSS have a list of play characters, naming a single 'Messenger-Scout' who makes a first entry at 39 and re-enters at 375 and 792 (for his function

as a scout, see 36, 41, 66, 369). Some editors suppose that the report in 792–819 is given by a separate messenger, because of its brevity and difference in verbal style from the long speeches of the Scout earlier in the play; these editors ask also whether the brevity, untypical of Aeschylus' messengers at *Pers.* 249–514 and *Ag.* 502–82, indicates, loss of a fuller report in 792–819. In favour of the single character are the certainty that only one actor was involved, and a gain in dramatic and visual continuity if he returned in the same function and costume.

S.d.: The play, like *Persians*, was almost certainly produced while the theatre lacked a backcloth (see *Introd.* 2.5 p. lv). The scene is set inside the city, and perhaps to be imagined as a public space, probably near the royal palace and the city's temples (see *Introd.* 2.5. p. lv n. 54). All entrances and exits are made by the side passages: one leads towards the city's gates, and therefore the imminent battle, the other to the temples and perhaps also the palace.

The opening scene would lack impact if there were no Theban citizens (mute extras) to respond visibly to Eteocles' speech and his final command at 30 'Quickly now... to the walls!'; some scholars nevertheless argue that this scene plays as well if Eteocles simply addresses the theatre audience, their imagination supplying his own on stage: on this question see Taplin, *Stagecraft* 123 ff.

1–77 This prologue scene is bound into the coming drama in a way rare in Greek Tragedy. Not only does it introduce the play's single character of consequence, Eteocles, in two monologues (1–38, 69–77), but between these it shows him interacting briefly with the only secondary figure of consequence, the Scout. Eteocles has been expecting the Scout (36–8), who leaves before the scene ends to gather more definite news of the attackers (66–8). Their scene here prepares for their second, much longer interaction, the 'Shield Scene' which fills the whole centre of the play (369–676: n.) and leads to a climax which is also the climax of the trilogy: Eteocles decides to duel with his brother Polynices, so fulfilling his father Oedipus' curse (677–719).

Eteocles is depicted in his sole responsibility for Thebes' safety (1–9); he is the steersman of the state (2–3, 62–4); he must manage its whole defence (10–20, 30–8, 76–7; cf. the Scout at 57–8, 62–5; *Introd.* 2.2. p. xxx). He knows through a seer of the imminent attack upon the gates (24–9), which the Scout then confirms with news of the principal attackers, the Seven (42, 55–6). The attackers have sacrificed in hope of victory (43–53—unsuccessfully, their own seer tells them, we later learn, 379): so a note of dependence upon the gods is struck at the outset which dominates the play (cf. *Introd.* 2.2

p. xxxi). Eteocles' strong concern here for the city and its people prepares for the Chorus who are their stage voice (78–181: n.).

Eteocles' second monologue, however, begins with two lines (69–70) weighted heavily with premonition: he appeals to the gods and to his father's curse to spare the city (71–6). Because we lack the two preceding plays, *Laius* and *Oedipus*, we cannot know what impact Aeschylus may have intended on the spectators with these lines, and why he formulated them as he did: see 720–91 n., and Introd. 2.2. p. xxix.

Eteocles then leaves to consolidate the defence (76, cf. 63).

1 *Cadmus*: 137–40 n.

2–3 *taking the tiller at the city's stern*: the ship of state, a frequent metaphor throughout antiquity: Eteocles again at 32 (n.), 62 and 652; cf. 208–10, 758–61.

8–9 *Zeus avert... true to his name*: as 'Zeus Averter' (of ill, etc.); the Greek wording reflects this variable title. There was a belief that to call on a god by a cult name appropriate to one's situation gave the best chance of success: see e.g. 116–19, *Supp.* 26–7, *Ag.* 160–6.

11–13 *the man still short... bodily strength*: the translation smooths out Greek expressions very difficult in their phrasing; the text is much disputed. West's text (translated) keeps two kinds of men, the underage and the mature, the latter still putting on strength [but many editors favour the reversal of ll. 12 and 13, giving roughly 'and the man past his youth, and every man taking care and as may befit him increasing the growth of his body's strength': this gives three categories, the first two separate, the third inclusive of these and others].

16–20 *Mother Earth*: 416. *accepted the whole labour*: the Greek verb connotes the wide hospitality of an innkeeper; similarly at 860 (n.).

24–9 *the seer... birds*: the blind Tiresias, not named, but famous for his unique understanding of birds' cries, and of their flight as reported to him (he 'husbanded' them for observation); cf. Sophocles, *Antigone* 999 ff., *Oedipus Tyrannus* 484; bird-augury in general *PB* 488–92. *without help of fire*: observing the combustion of sacrifices was a dominant mode of prognostication, *PB* 496–9. *Achaean*: a loose synonym for Greeks from the Peloponnese; here Argives are meant, from Argos the city of Adrastus (50, 575), to whom Polynices appealed for help against Thebes.

32 *breastworks... tower-platforms*: terminology for both land-fortifications and warships.

34–5 *the throng of outside attackers*: slightly contemptuous and attempting reassurance. *the god will end things well!*: see on 77.

42 *captains furious for war*: later found to include the seer Amphiaraus, who foresaw his own death and so fights reluctantly (587–8), but is a great warrior (569, 593, 616). For ‘furious for war’ see n. on *Pers.* 73.

43–8 *a bull’s throat, etc.*: swearing over a sacrificial victim’s blood was usual; touching it gave the oath heavy solemnity through the symbolic joining of blood from actual slaughter and of blood vowed (48), and here adds awful prophetic significance; a similar rite solemnizes an alliance at Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.2.8–9. Aeschylus’ description here was famous, cited e.g. at Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 187–9 and (the whole passage 42–56) by later literary critics, orators, and anthologists. *black*: literally ‘black-bound’, but ‘-bound’ as in 160 ‘bronze(-bound)’ may mean ‘cross-banded’ for strength, with leather or metal, perhaps painted black. *Ares*: god of War, 63, 115. *Enyo*: (goddess of) Havoc, Homer, *Iliad* 5.592. *Terror*: (personified) *Iliad* 13.299. Three divinities are named, as in 224–5, the number being ritual: *Supp.* 26, *LB* 244, *Eum.* 759, etc.; cf. n. on ‘thrice’ at 745–6. *sack... by force*: l. 47 is repeated almost word for word at 531, in the attacker Hippomedon’s individual oath.

49–53 *memorial tokens*: locks of hair, probably, sent home in case the dead body itself does not return, Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 821; these were also common tributes of the living to the dead (see esp. *LB* 168, 172, etc.). *Adrastus*: they presume that their leader (575) will return safely to Argos (as myth indeed told; he figures in Euripides’ *Suppliants*, in which the bodies of the Seven are recovered for burial by Athens under its king Theseus). *lions*: nature’s prime comparison for ferocity, and Epic’s: in war at e.g. Homer, *Iliad* 15.592.

55 *lots*: for their apparent importance in the play see *Introd.* 2.2 p. xxxiv.

64 *a wave on ... land*: the image again at 111, also ‘noisy’, 112–15.

66 *look-out, for what’s left of the day*: an artifice in translation, the Greek being ‘for the future a watcher-by-day’. The Scout saw in the previous night the attackers’ preparation of which Tiresias had warned Eteocles (29), and will soon return with news of their actual positions, 375–6.

68 *through my clear report you’ll ... be unharmed*: cf. Eteocles in 36–8.

69–77 A passionate prayer for his city’s survival by its responsible but endangered leader closes the prologue-scene with credible force; but the implicit

appeal for his own safety (70) strikes a grimly prophetic note: see the n. on 1–77, at end.

71–2 *raze... root and branch*: a Homeric image, of ‘clearing woodland’, *Iliad* 12.148; it complements the image of destruction by sea storm, 63–4. [After 72, editors generally delete the awkward and anticlimactic l. 73 ‘as it (the city) pours out its voice, and (do not raze) its hearths and homes’.]

77 *when a city prospers, it honours its gods*: ‘ring-composition’ closes the prologue scene; cf. 4, 35. The converse idea, conquest and the gods’ desertion, comes at 217–18.

78–181 Entry-song (*parodos*) of the Chorus. They are women, and young unmarried women at that (109, 171): in a time of extreme crisis, Aeschylus chooses not male citizens (contrast the counsellors of *Persians*) but terrified females as foil to the determined leader Eteocles. Their vivid imagination of a noisy attack (78–91) leads to appeals to the gods (92–181), interrupted by renewed imaginings (111–27, 155, 161) and by fear of a woman’s fate if captured, slavery and rape (110: a fear which returns violently at 326–8, 351, 363–9, 454–6). The Chorus’ chief anxiety, however, is that of Eteocles himself, for the city, its people, and its gods (87–8, 104–5, 108–21, 130, 139–45, 156–7, 164–81). In this way Aeschylus maintains common safety as the theme dominating the play’s first half (Intro. 2.2. p. xxx); in it he gives the Chorus no awareness of Oedipus’ curse, or concern for Eteocles’ individual destiny.

The *parodos* does not begin with the chorus chanting to the regular ‘marching’ rhythm with which they begin *Persians* and *Suppliants*; instead, there is free lyric (78–107), in the excited dochmiac metre; then come three pairs of responding stanzas (108–81) in which dochmiacs also dominate (as later in 686–711). Sung dance is here at its most free and emotionally expressive. [The extent of the textual loss at 78 is not determinable.]

81–2 *dust... messenger without voice*: this conceit also at *Supp.* 180, in a similar image of a moving army.

84 [The line is corrupt in the MSS, but an ancient paraphrase allows confident reconstruction of the sense; 83 is wholly unintelligible.]

85–6 *flies in the air*: of sound, *PB* 115, of words *Supp.* 657. *irresistible water*: *Persians* 87–90, also of an army. *striking a mountain*: mountain torrents after heavy rain?

89 [*a word missing*]: either ‘evil’ (88) or a new noun like ‘warfare’ (cf. 90–1) *shouts over the walls*.

90 *bright shields*: glittering armour is often described, but ‘bright’ here is Greek ‘white’ and the shields of Argos (etymologically interpretable as ‘White City’) are white elsewhere. It is hard not to hear in *shields* a pre-echo of the play’s central ‘Shield-Scene’, 369–676; even more so in 125–7.

95 and 99 *gods’ . . . images*: receiving ritual supplication, 211 ff., cf. *Supp.* 189–92, 241–2, etc. [For the supplement *ancestral*, cf. *Pers.* 404.]

102–3 *robes and garlands*: regularly dedicated for gods’ images to wear, in high festivals no less than in crises. At Homer, *Iliad.* 6.90 ff. Hecuba of Troy offers a robe for (the image of) Athena protectress of cities (cf. our 129 ff.). [West’s *When and need to throw* supply defective sense and metre.]

108–49 [West judges that these lyric lines make up two responding stanzas; most editors reject this because the excited metre of 87–100 continues in them, hardly alleviated by the more regular rhythms which dominate the two certain stanza-pairs of 150–81. West’s text in 108–49 therefore has many conjectures and some deletions, to achieve ‘responsion’.]

113 *helmet-crests slanting*: either transverse, as depicted in some older vase-paintings (rather than from back to front); or nodding with a head’s movement or in the wind?

115 *seethes*: (also 761) makes the metaphor in *wave of men* (cf. 64) concrete.

116 *with whom lies the outcome of all*: a variant of Zeus ‘the fulfiller’ and the like, e.g. *Ag.* 973, 1486; Zeus all-powerful 255 below, *Supp.* 815.

122 [The Greek text is defective metrically; there is no major loss of sense.]

124 *bits . . . pipe tones of death*: see 463–4 and n.

125–7 *conspicuous amid their host*: not least for their ornamented shields, 385 ff. etc. *as their lot fell*: 55–6 (n.), 376, etc.

129–31 *daughter of Zeus . . . in your love of battle . . . Pallas*: similarly evoked at e.g. *Eum.* 292–6.

131–4 *lord of horses . . . ruler of ocean*: Poseidon, potent by land as well as sea (310 n.). He was credited variously with the creation, or first breeding or taming, of horses, and depicted himself as a horseman. *wrought fish-spear*: lit. ‘fish-spearing contrivance’, elevated language for the trident, emblem of Poseidon’s power, *Supp.* 218, *PB* 924–5; the Chorus imply that he should use it against the attackers of Thebes. [*words missing*: —but not sense; e.g. ‘wielding power’ has been supplemented.]

137–40 *Ares progenitor*: the Theban founding hero Cadmus was the god Ares' relative in some way (mythical details are vague) and gave his name to the citadel he built, the Cadmea (l. 1); in most accounts he married Harmonia, Ares' daughter by *Cypris*... *the race's foremother* (Aphrodite). *your care*: the Greek word connotes duty to family. [The Greek is corrupt in these lines, but the general sense clear enough; West leaves some words obelized as incurable, amid which 'alas! alas!' are here replaced by the conjecture *progenitor*.]

146–9 *Lycean lord*: Apollo; this cult-title, also e.g. *Supp.* 686, is not convincingly explained; it may reflect an ancient association with his defence of men against wolves ('wolf' is *lyk*-in Greek), rather than with a cult in Lycia in Asia Minor (cf. also *Ag.* 1257 and my n. in Collard, 2002). Thus the point of *prove Lycean* is unclear, unless the linking of the god with his sister Artemis in 149, invoked here for her huntress's bow, is to invite also Apollo's archery (*Ag.* 510) against the attackers. [West makes deletions to achieve metrical responsion; the MSS end 149 with an express vocative 'beloved Artemis' (cf. 154).]

151 *Hera*: Zeus' wife. Her temples were very ancient throughout Greece, and frequently at the heart of cities. She was in particular the patroness of Argos (*Supp.* 299), by which Thebes is now attacked.

153 *laden axles squealing*: also at 205.

157 *god*... *lead the outcome*: 35, cf. *Eum.* 544 'An end is appointed and waits', where 'end' is the word often translated as 'outcome' or 'fulfilment', see e.g. 116 and n.

159 *Stones hail, etc.*: the sense is appropriate rather than got confidently from the text [but a papyrus fragment of 155–64 gives some support to the MSS].

162–3 *the sacred power*: normally part of Zeus' supreme authority, but apparently deputed here to Apollo [but the text is badly corrupt, the papyrus defective, and *son of Zeus* is a conjecture. Some editors make everything refer to Athena as 'daughter of Zeus' in 162, for at *Eum.* 826–8 she has her father's power in war].

164 *Onca Outside the City*: also 487, 501: Athena's local title and temple very near Thebes in an outlying settlement named Oncae.

170 *an army with a foreign tongue*: the Argives, as attackers from another country (34, 583 and n.); together with their Peloponnesian allies they spoke chiefly the Doric or Arcadian dialects, and the Thebans themselves Boeotian (*Persians* 805–6). [There is a metrical problem in the Greek line, but the sense seems sound.]

175 *stand over*: as over a man wounded in battle, a Homeric expression.

178–9, 180–1 *Our city's rites, etc.*: the native gods are invited to save the rituals from which they themselves benefit through sacrifice; for comparable prayers, cf. *LB* 483–5 (to the dead Agamemnon), 789–92 (to Zeus himself); cf. also 304–5 and n.

182–286 First episode: Eteocles returns and calms the Chorus' panic. His first angry speech condemns such panic as demoralizing; and women should not range abroad when action belongs only to men (182–202: n.). There follows a mixed lyric and spoken exchange of extreme tension (203–44: the so-called 'epirrhetic' structure found first in *Persians* 255–89 (n.) and recurring at e.g. 686–711 below; cf. *Introd.* 3.3 p. lxii); while the Chorus again sing of their fear, Eteocles argues them into a proper quiet; but he achieves this only through a wholly spoken dialogue (245–63: n.). His final speech (264–86) accepts the women's need to invoke the gods (264–70, 279–80), while he himself will sacrifice for their favour, as men may and must (271–8; cf. his earlier 230–2). Before he leaves to post Theban opponents of the Seven (282–6: n.), he is given one line, 281 'you'll have no greater escape from what is fated', which takes up the Chorus' 263 'I'll suffer what is fated' and suggests that he is in fate's grip, and is strongly recalled in 719, his final words before fate indeed takes him; see also n. on 281.

182–202 Eteocles' violent attack upon the female Chorus shows many traditional male antipathies, the earliest in Hesiod, *Theogony* 690 ff., cf. Semonides 7.72 ff.; in drama cf. the (female) chorus' attack upon unnaturally assertive women at *LB* 594–630, and generally Eur. *Hippolytus* 616 ff., *Medea* 412 ff., Aristophanes, *Women at the Thesmophoria* 786 ff.

195 *what you will get, etc.*: 'Second Person' in a half-colloquial generalization, as at 281, 685, 719. [The line is written separately at the bottom of a page in the principal MS, so that some editors move it to follow 186 or 190; in both places it weakens context and sequence. It is the important bridge from Eteocles' generalizations to his immediate concern.]

197 *anything between*: illogical, an automatic extension under stress to a completed antithesis; similarly at *PB* 116. Eteocles means 'all besides', groups rather than individuals.

198–9 *determined*: by Eteocles as sole ruler (196, cf. 2–8); cf. Creon's sentence of stoning proposed for Antigone at Soph. *Antigone* 36, 60. *public stoning*: the people share 'anonymously' the punishment of the people's enemy; so a regicide deserves this fate, Ag. 1118, 1616.

200–1 *What lies outside the house, etc.*: cf. 232. The ultimate ancestor of this axiom is Hector's instruction to Andromache in Homer, *Iliad* 6.490 ff. 'go into the house and see to your own work . . . the war is to be all men's concern, and especially mine'.

203 *son of Oedipus*: also 372, 677; cf. *Intro.* 2.2. p. xxix n. 24; a not uncommon form of address to a person of high lineage, or of reference to one, e.g. at 407, 504, 609.

206–7 *a voice from the parts through their mouth*: for these 'pipes', see 463–4 and n. [The Greek text here is badly damaged but convincingly restored on the model of those lines.]

208–10 *a sailor who flees from the stern*: the helmsman, usually the captain, useless on the prow; Aeschylus has Eteocles repeat the imagery of 'the ship of state' (2, 62–4, etc.). With *flees* Eteocles rebukes the Chorus precisely: their terror has caused general flight (191).

212–13 *the blizzard of death, etc.*: the metaphor is powerful through its abruptness, unlike the milder image in 159 [some editors therefore replace *blizzard* with 'hail of stones' from there].

217–18 *Then this will be, etc.*: the implication seems to be 'your terrified prayers will only bring on the city's capture and the gods' desertion' [if the text is sound; some editors write 'Do they not say, the gods, etc.', a clearer implication of danger].

221–2 [*consumed by flame from an army of foes*: text partly conjectural (West leaves it obelized), but the general sense is sure.]

223 *Do not be ill-advised, etc.*: Eteocles wants calm, not signs of panic, when the Chorus pray: 237–8.

224–5 *Obedience . . . Well-being . . . the Saver*: printed as personifications by West, because of the explicit *mother* and *wife*; for such abstractions, see e.g. 45, 535, *Supp.* 1039–41. [The text is doubtful, however; 'wife' as a relationship between abstractions is most insecure; *the Saver* is usually a title of Zeus himself, e.g. 520, *Supp.* 26. No convincing emendations have been found.]

230–1 *victims in sacrifice and for divination*: regular before battle, 42 ff., 378–9; in any crisis e.g. *Supp.* 449–51. The nature of the flames and the appearance of the entrails were consulted (see n. on *PB* 493–9). Eteocles, however, seems to have no time for such consultation now, instead promising the gods rich offerings should he win, 271–7.

232 *stay inside the house*: see n. on 200–1.

235 *How can you be angry with us, etc.?*: as Eteocles was in 182–95.

236 *honouring*: prayers as ‘honour’, 77, *Supp.* 625–9; cf. sacrifices at 15.

239 *shouts flying*: the image of 85 [but *and the shouts* is West’s bold conjecture for an adverb ‘(clatter) in confusion’ which many editors keep].

243 *Ares’ nourishment, the blood of men*: a Homeric picture, *Iliad* 5.289 ‘another man falls and sates Ares with blood’.

246 *do not hear them too clearly*: a folk maxim, usually including also ‘see and don’t see them’.

247 *groaning*: both literally and metaphorically, 901; cf. *Pers.* 683.

251 *partners*: an appeal to common interest, like 253, 271, etc.; cf. also 220 ‘our assembled gods’; 178–9 n.

252 *Damnation take you*: a brusque colloquialism, occasional in tragedy, e.g. *Ag.* 1267; *Soph. Oedipus Tyrannus* 1146 ‘Damnation take you! Will you be quiet?’

253–4 *slavery*: the prime fear of women captives, 110, 326–31, *LB* 77; cf. Eteocles at 75, the Scout at 471, 793.

255 *Zeus... your bolt*: his lightning, 453, 513, etc.

256 *women*: Eteocles loses patience again, after his earlier anger on this subject, 182–202 n.

258 *Words of ill omen again...?*: a similar rebuke in the exchange at *Supp.* 512.

260 *I beg you*: the Chorus’ admission in 259 makes Eteocles suddenly gentler. His wording in this line is close to that of a prayer to a god, but Aeschylus seems to intend exasperated irony.

264–86 Eteocles’ masterful speech matches that beginning the episode, 182–202. The Chorus are to be silent (264–70) while he makes his own prayers to the gods (271–8), and then to join in with their own ritual invocations (279–81): thus the content and mood of the following choral ode are prepared (287–368). Aeschylus has Eteocles recall the Scout’s appeal to post seven defenders at the seven gates (57–8) and so anticipate more urgent calls to act (282–6: but see n.): these last lines pre-echo the ‘Shield-Scene’ (369–676).

265 *away from the images*: ‘motivating’ the Chorus’ move into the *orkhêstra* for their ode at 287; a similar dramatist’s manoeuvre at *Supp.* 506–8.

266 *make this better prayer, for the gods to be our allies*: the Chorus have prayed before to the gods to save the city (130–81), but not as ‘allies’, for which idea cf. *LB* 2. [266 is deleted by some editors who judge it a damaging anticipation of Eteocles’ instruction at 279.]

268–9 *raise the sacred chant...sacrifice*: richly intermingled terms for women’s ritual cries (825, *Ag.* 28, 595), and men’s battlefield cries, for victory (497 below). *the Greek custom*: implicitly warning the Chorus not to go to the noisy excesses associated with ‘barbarians’ (cf. 280; *Pers.* 635–6, 939 and nn.).

270 *encouragement for friends*: the reverse of 237; *releasing...from war’s fear*: cf. 135.

271–2 *gods who hold land...city...plains...marketplace*: a similarly comprehensive list in prayers at *Ag.* 88–90.

273 *Dirce...Ismenus*: Thebes’ two rivers, worshipped as gods; cf. 308.

275–8 *set up trophies*: the idea returns at 958, in ironic reversal, after Eteocles has been killed. [The MSS have suffered interpolation of glosses subsequently expanded, it seems, into whole lines (276, 278a) or displacing original text (277). After 275 *we will bloody...with sheep* is found 276 ‘slaughtering bulls I thus vow to the gods’, possibly constructed from 43, and after 278 *holy temples* comes the nonsensical 278a ‘I shall garland in front of the temples and garments of the enemy’. The last phrase is duplicated in the MSS from 277, where West has boldly replaced it with *and dedicate*.]

281 *you’ll have no greater, etc.*: on this line, see 182–286, n., at end. Similarly worded axioms occur at *Ag.* 902, *PB* 518.

282–6 These lines pose a dramaturgical question not certainly answered. Eteocles announces that he *will...post* (284) the seven defenders, including himself, before further reports come (285–6), and he leaves to do this at 286; but the future tense here seems to pre-empt and conflict with his response when he does later hear the Scout’s detailed report of the seven attackers, and with his need and undertaking at that time still to post some of the defenders. See also n. on 369–719 (1) below. Many scholars find no inconsistency or weakening of the later scene, but Taplin’s full discussion (*Stagecraft* 142 ff.) leads him to diagnose interpolation of 282–6 (perhaps by the fabricators of the inauthentic passages 861–74,

1005–77), or possibly displacement from elsewhere in the play, rather than simple carelessness in Aeschylus. *in proud style*: evoking the Homeric ideal of heroes duelling; the expression is varied at 465, in a different context.

287–368 First ode; alone again, the Chorus return to their fears, and again imagine the onslaught and the dreadful outcome for Thebes and its women if it succeeds (cf. 78–181 n.). These horrors are unrelieved throughout the closing two pairs of stanzas (321–68); but the first pair (287–320) ends with further impassioned appeals to Thebes' gods not to leave a city where they are so long established amid its natural fertility, the riches which, the Chorus imply, they enjoy from sacrifices (304–12).

The ode is shot through with Homeric colouring: see nn. on 291–4, 298–300, 321–2, 326–9, 343–4. The Greek metres are extraordinarily various, and so enhance the images of chaos.

287–9 *I do care*: that is, to 'make vows like these', 279; for the expression in this context cf. *Pers.* 1049. *heart...sleepless with fear*: it can dance with fear, *LB* 167, 1025. *anxieties...neighbours*: a similar metaphor of disease at *Ag.* 1004.

291–4 *snakes...feared...for...young*: cf. 501–3, *LB* 247–9, an image originating in Homer, *Iliad* 2.308–14; vultures losing their young react angrily, *Ag.* 50–4. *grimmiest of bedmates*: perhaps echoed in the pictures of rape, 333–5, 363–8.

298–300 *others are slinging, etc.*: slingers assailing defenders on walls are at odds with the generality of siege-descriptions: after Homer, *Iliad* 12.159–60 defenders hurl down stones on attackers, and defending slingers use smooth stones [so editors conjecture 'our townsmen hurl jagged stones in a hail against those who besiege them']. *jagged stones*: a Homeric phrase, *Iliad* 4.518.

302 *gods born of Zeus*: not all were, despite the catalogue 129–54, headed by Athena his daughter, 129; e.g. Poseidon 310, his brother.

304–5 *What...soil better than this*: an appeal to a god's own interest, like 327: see 178–81 and n.

308 *Dirce*: 273 n. *most enriching of waters*: at *Supp.* 1024–9 the immigrants to Argos learn to praise its fertile rivers more than their native Nile.

310 *Poseidon*: god of the world's whole surface, controlling its waters by sea and land: 131–4. *Tethys*: wife to Oceanus, the supreme river bounding the earth, *PB* 139–40.

319 *noble shrines*: cf. 166–8, 241, of the Theban acropolis.

320–68 These details of a ransacked city recur throughout Tragedy, and are vividly dwelt upon by Clytemnestra at Ag. 321–9 and by choruses of captive women at Eur. *Hecuba* 901–42 and *Trojan Women* 551–67.

321–2 *hurl...to Hades*: Aeschylus appropriates a Homeric phrase used of human slaughter, e.g. *Iliad* 1.3, 5.190. Throughout 321–32 a ‘city’ is variously both the buildings and the inhabitants; cf. the anxieties of 220–2.

324 *an Achaean man*: the singular seems deliberate, as if to evoke Adrastus the leader of the attackers (50 and n.).

326–9 *led away...by their hair*: the victims at Troy were thus imagined, Homer, *Iliad* 22.62 ff. *like horses*: the simile also *Supp.* 430–1.

331 *its women lost as pillage*: this is the implication of Aeschylus’ allusive wording, lit. ‘its booty lost amid mingled shrieking’ [but the text is insecure]. This whole stanza is about the cruel seizure of women; later comes their rape, explicitly in 333–5, their concubinage in 363–8 (nn.).

333–5 *plucked unripe before marriage...their homes destroyed*: rape: pathetic reversal of a bride’s happy journey to the groom’s house. [The text and translation are insecure; but cf. the captured women at *LB* 75–7.]

340–1 *leads...away...kills...carry fire*: vivid compression, evoking chaotic haste, an effect continued in 345–55.

343–4 *Ares...restraint*: Aeschylus at his most densely allusive (the imagery and vocabulary of Ares the war-god is Homeric)—but also paradoxical: the god’s insatiable war-frenzy (*Supp.* 635–6) destroys all conduct tempered by respect for heaven (fr. 281a.33); at Ag. 338–42 the Greek’s lust for booty at Troy causes carnage. *blasts*: war, 63–4, 115.

345–68 [While the general sense of these lines can be established, many corruptions in the MSS make detailed restoration of the text uncertain, esp. in 345–7, 356, 363–8.]

345–7 *a net encircling the walls*: the besiegers visualized as such, a metaphor. Some translate ‘a net of siege-towers’, although these are not attested in Aeschylus’ day; but ladders are, 466 and n. Zeus’ and Night’s ‘net’ is thrown over Troy’s walls, Ag. 357.

348–9 *infants...screaming in their own blood*: extreme exaggeration; the Greeks seldom killed infants (Astyanax, Hector’s son at Troy, was an

infamous exception, e.g. Eur. *Trojan Women* 725, 1173–9), but took them into slavery with their mothers.

355 *he desires neither less nor equal*: all want more than both successful looters (352) and unsuccessful (354).

356 *what follows*: the pillage described in 357–62.

357–62 *produce... Earth's... bounty*: grain, fruit or oil, ruined when storage-vessels are smashed as looters run amok (351, 359–61). *vindictive storemen*: cruel irony: plunderers are meant, not the previous stewards.

363–8 [The translation approximates to West's conjectural restoration of these lines, but he leaves 364–5 obelized in his text]. *bed* is consistent with *nocturnal rites* (for the latter see Cassandra serving her captors at Ag. 1438–43, 1446–7); *rites* here are grimly ironic, the term being used properly of marriage, not rape: see n. on *Supp.* 123–4.

369–719 Second episode; in 369–676 the Scout reports and describes successively the Seven attackers, ending with Eteocles' brother Polynices; Eteocles names his opposing defenders, ending with himself (he had named himself among them at 282)—and recognizes how his father's curse has worked their confrontation (653–5, 672–5). In 677–719 the Chorus in horror try to dissuade him from the duel, but Eteocles is inflexible. The episode is remarkable in its power, part of which comes from its unique structure (cf. n. on 1–77, *Intro.* 2.2 p. xxxii). See also Map 4.

(1). 369–676: the 'Shield-Scene' (*Intro.* 2.2 *ibid.*). The seven 'pairs' of speeches, each a Scout's description and Eteocles' response, are set off from one another by three pairs of responding lyric stanzas in which the Chorus renew their fears and prayers, but appropriately to the descriptions they have just heard. This variation between extended speeches and brief lyric has a secondary benefit: it avoids possible visual monotony in the theatre, however mobile or demonstrative the actors playing Scout and Eteocles; for such alternation of brief choral lyric with dialogue, see *Intro.* 3.3 p. lxii. The formal sequence of itself increases the tension for an audience, well though they know the inevitable conclusion. There are other important ways in which Aeschylus orchestrates the climax. The first five of the Seven are described as boastful and aggressive, in their shield-devices as in their persons, for they are bad men; but the sixth is the tragic Amphiaraus, a seer long aware of his coming death at Thebes (587–9, 609–18); he has been accused of cowardice in its face (382–3) but is calmly acceptant (590), a good and pious man caught up with bad (598–614); he even denounces both Tydeus and Polynices on his own side (571–86), deploring the latter's attack

on his native land (for Amphiarus see Introd. 2.2 p. xxxii). This comes immediately before Polynices is revealed as the seventh and last attacker, and as Eteocles' inevitable opponent. Simultaneously, Eteocles matches each attacker with a defender whose qualities are in moral contrast—except for Amphiarus, whose opponent is a man of uncomplicated prowess, and for Polynices, whom Eteocles denounces for betrayal in the same terms as Amphiarus had done (664–71), and whom he opposes confident in a true justice where Polynices claimed a false one (659–73, cf. 645–8); but he confronts Polynices chiefly as brother against enemy brother, both of them accursed (674–5, cf. 653–7; subsequently, 695–7, 709–11). Lastly, there is the brilliance of the attackers' character-portraits and shield-descriptions, always vivid and forceful, sometimes dramatized with direct speech; and of Eteocles' calculated, apt, and cogent responses, sometimes equally colourful: his collected behaviour and command of language have been carefully anticipated in his prologue-scene. The whole sequence reveals Aeschylus' complete mastery of dramatic poetry; it is a tour de force comparable with the greatest scenes of the *Oresteia*. [The variations in Eteocles' verb-tenses for his acts of posting worry editors: present at 553, futures at 408, 621, 672, simple past at 505, perfects at 448, 472, especially because they seem to conflict with Eteocles' earlier statement that he would leave immediately to post the defenders (282–4: see n.). The variations are in themselves not problematic, however: Eteocles may be imagined to name defenders he has already chosen in his mind, or already posted, or now decides upon; see also n. on 378–9. Nor is there a dramaturgical difficulty: Aeschylus simply subordinates reality or plausibility to impact; a similar issue is discussed in the n. on 720–91.]

(2). 677–719: Eteocles rejects the Chorus' dissuasion (677–85); the antiphonal section which follows, mixing choral lyric and actor's speech (686–711; cf. 182–286 and n.), shows him inflexible before his fate, for the gods are fulfilling his father's curse. The Chorus' alarm is passionate, using again the irregular dochmiac metre (78–181 n., at end); they describe Eteocles' determination as a mad lust to shed unlawful blood, the ruinous work of the house's Fury (700); this becomes the preoccupation of their following ode (720–91: n.). Eteocles' resigned farewell is cold (702–4, cf. 713, 715) but honourable (683–5, cf. 717). In a final, intense exchange (*stichomythia*, 711–19 and n.) he goes off to his death, for the will of heaven is inescapable (719): Introd. 2.2. p. xxxi.

369 *s.d.*: Eteocles' use of demonstrative pronouns for some of his nominated defenders does not mean that they were visible; such pronouns regularly refer to persons or things 'offstage', nearby or far off (e.g. *Pers.* 141 and n.).

Furthermore, if six defenders were visible, it would become even more heavily predictable that Eteocles is to be the seventh.

369–74 The two part-voices of the Chorus are made deliberately similar in wording to emphasize the equal haste of Scout and Eteocles; although spoken, they ‘correspond’ like lyric stanzas.

370 *important new information*: cf. 40.

371 *haste...errand*: a sort of ‘concealed stage-direction’; cf. *Pers.* 247–8, of the approaching Messenger. The Greek contains a metaphor from chariots, lit. ‘in haste driving the hubs of his feet on their errand’: leg-joints move as easily as wheels on their axles.

373–4 [*exactly in time...disorders*: the Greek text is disputed, but no emendation is fully satisfactory.]

375 *I’ll speak, etc.*: the Scout begins abruptly, without greeting the king; this suits their common haste, 371 = 374.

378–9 *Tydeus*: father of the *Iliad*’s Diomedes, 14.113 ff.; see 571–5 n. *Proetus*: a remote ancestor of the founding king of Thebes; for the Gates see Map 4. *The seer*: Amphiaraus, 382 (n.); unnamed like the seer Tiresias at 24. He restrains the violent Tydeus, whom he detests (571). This delay in the attack also ‘explains’ why Eteocles has had time to choose his defenders deliberately (n. on 369–719 (1), at end). *victims*: those slaughtered at 43, in the hope of victory.

381 *a snake...midday hissing*: its most active time, held to be the most dangerous.

382–3 *son of Oicles*: the patronymic suffices to identify Amphiaraus; the office of seer was hereditary in his family. With *wise* Aeschylus is either himself anticipating the attack’s disastrous outcome through Amphiaraus’ foresight (587–9, 615–19) or infusing the Scout’s words with ironic allusion to it. *slinks fawningly before*: like a cowering dog; Eteocles rejects such fawning at 704. *death and battle*: possibly hendiadys for ‘fatal fight’ (the Greek has alliteration). *cowardice*: the Scout later absolves Amphiaraus of this, 569.

384–6 Tydeus’ nodding plumes and ringing bells mean to warn eye and ear of his terrible advance; cf. Eteocles at 398–9; such bells on shields evoke a barbaric warrior also at Sophocles fr. 859 and in the fourth-century tragedy *Rhesus* 384 (ascribed to Euripides). The passage is used by Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 964–5 in paratragedy to evoke the exaggerated and loud soldier-figure Lamachus, a contemporary; cf. 581–4 there.

387–90 *arrogant device*: Tydeus through his shield arrogates pre-eminence among his fellow Argives (and the Thebans) just as the brilliant full moon dominates the stars of heaven. *wrought*: the word is Homeric, for fine metalwork, e.g. *Iliad* 23.741. *moon... the eye of night*: so too in Pindar, e.g. *Olympian* 3.19–20; a different ‘eye of night’ at *Pers.* 428 (n.); the sun is day’s eye, e.g. Sophocles, *Antigone* 103–4.

393–4 *horse snorting, etc.*: cf. the pictures of 122–3, 206–7.

395–6 *relied upon.*: the full meaning is ‘guaranteed’, metaphorical from pledges placed in the palm of the hand when bargaining; the image recurs in 449, 470, 797.

399 *plumes and bells, etc.*: variations on this folk-maxim are found in all cultures; for Tragedy, cf. e.g. Eur. *Children of Heracles* 684.

402 *prophetic for someone*: i.e. for Tydeus himself, disastrously, as 403–6 show. Some identify the ‘someone’ as his yet to be named opponent, i.e. favourably prophetic. This use of the indefinite pronoun for an enemy is semi-colloquial and contemptuous; cf. *Supp.* 683, 883, 903.

403–5 *prove right and true in meaning*: the Greeks invested names with meaning, often finding them a guide to a person’s nature or destiny (often grim: Latin *nomen omen*). This play on names begins in Homer and is very common in Tragedy; Aeschylus delights in it, e.g. 440–5, 526–8, 576–8 (and nn.); it often includes terms like *right* and *true* (for these see esp. Plato, *Cratylus* 385b–c, a dialogue devoted to the significance of names and words). The most famous example is at *Ag.* 690, Helen ‘hellish’ to ships, etc.: see any commentary there. Tydeus’ arrogation of heaven’s *night* for his device (388–90 n.) implies that death’s ‘night’ is inevitable for himself.

407–13 *son of Astacus... from the Sown Men... Melanippus*: a descendant of the founding Cadmeans (137–40 and n.) of Thebes, who grew from the teeth of Ares’ dragon sown in the earth by Cadmus; mythic accounts vary, and it is not clear here whether *whom Ares spared* refers to the generating teeth or to just a few of those generated. With *truly a native of the land* Aeschylus makes a heavy play upon *Sown Men*. Melanippus’ name (‘Black Horse’) is not exploited by Eteocles, despite an opportunity of linking ‘black’ with the fatal night of Tydeus’ device, and the simile comparing him with an eager horse (393). In Euripides’ fragmentary *Meleager* (fr. 537) Tydeus is said to have eaten Melanippus’ brains after killing him: cf. n. on 571.

414–15 *Ares... with his dice*: Eteocles, like a Homeric hero, sees fighting as determined by the gods, often capriciously, but is confident that *Justice* will triumph for the Theban motherland's soil when it sends its son, *blood-kin*, to defend it; for *Justice* see Polynices' device, 646–8, and Eteocles' riposte, 667. [*of blood-kin*, a minority reading among the MSS, is superior to the majority reading 'divine (Justice)': the Greek words differ by only one letter.]

417–21: the first strophe of three responding pairs which piece out the description of the first six of the Seven and their opponents; the first anti-strophe is at 451–6. See 369–719 n.

422 *may the gods grant, etc.*: the Scout echoes the Chorus' prayer of 417–18.

423 *Electran Gates*: named after Electra, a sister of Thebes' founder Cadmus (1).

425 *a giant, taller, etc.*: Tydeus (*the one... before*) is said at Homes, *Iliad* 5.801 to be a small man. Here, 'giant' associates Capaneus with the true giants or Titans, rebellious and defeated opponents of Zeus, such as Typhon (493 and n.). [After 425 the line 426 'he makes terrible threats against our walls, which I pray fortune may not fulfil' is deleted as an interpolation weakly keeping apart 425 and 427, and duplicating 427; it was adapted from the very similar 549.]

428–9 *and Zeus'... stop him*: text and translation insecure. *opposition with a blast* in the translation expands and gives the connotation of a single Greek noun meaning 'strife, contention'. Capaneus' defiance is extreme.

430–1 *likened... to the warmth of midday*: this absurd belittlement of Zeus' lightning in itself suggests Capaneus' inevitable destruction by it, as Eteocles picks up, 444–5.

432 *naked*: as normally in heroic art; there is no implication that Capaneus is himself going 'naked' into war with Zeus. *letters of gold*: figures are often named in vase-paintings, less often given 'speech' in letters near or round their heads. Cf. Eteocles 468, Polynices 646–8.

435 *send...*: the imperative construction breaks off into two interrogatives [if the text is sound. The imperative 'send' is printed as a parenthesis by some editors, as '—do the sending!—who will take his stand?'; so too West, who entertains but does not print a conjectural substitute 'tell us!'].

437 *Here too one gain gives birth to another*: an adapted proverb, it seems, but translation is insecure; Eteocles may mean that Capaneus' doomed boasting

(425: 438–40) is one gain and his scorn of the gods (427–8) another because it will draw Zeus' punishment (443–5).

438–9 *tongues are...accusing evidence*: Aeschylus neatly uses an apt metaphor, from forensic language.

440 *those prepared to act*: allusive plural, for Zeus alone is meant.

441 *well-practised mouth*: alternative but less good translation: 'in laying bare his word'.

444–50 *lightning-bolt of fire will come to him, not any likeness*: a sardonic riposte echoing Capaneus' 'likening' Zeus' lightning to midday warmth, 432–3. Aeschylus plays here on Capaneus' name as 'Man of Smoke'; cf. Eur. *Suppliants* 495–6 'Has not Capaneus's body rightly been made into smoke by the lightning?' There may be an echo of this play when his opponent Polyphontes is named in 448 as one 'who burns with courage'. *Artemis the defender*: this is the implied meaning here of the literal adjective 'who stands before (houses)': Artemis' image, like that of her brother Apollo (e.g. Ag. 1081), stood before houses, to protect those who set out, as Polyphontes soon will, and Megareus at 476. [After 445 editors delete 446 '(likeness of it) to the sun's midday warmth', weakly interpolated on the model of 431.]

454–6 *drags me, etc.*: into captive slavery and concubinage: 363–8, n. on 331.

458–60 *Eteoclus*: rarely named in myth among the Seven, probably because his name is a doublet of Eteocles; both mean 'True Glory' or the like; but he appears at e.g. Eur. *Suppliants* 872, where his civic, not martial, virtues are given. *helmet*: used for drawing lots in Homer, e.g. *Iliad* 3.316 (a 'leaping' lot at 7.182). *Neistid*: the name appears to mean 'lowest' [but the MSS have also 'Neteid', which would suggest naming after a hero Neteus, otherwise unrecorded. Before 458 editors delete a line clumsily fabricated to amplify the terse *Speak I shall*, 'Next, now: of the man who next drew his lot at the gates'; but *Speak* adequately picks up 451 'Speak...'].

461–4 The eager and noisy chafing of Eteoclus' horses recalls the general descriptions of 123–4 and 206–7. It appears that *headbands* incorporated *muzzle-pipes* to magnify snorting, perhaps converting it into a roaring *whistle* (cf. 124, 206), with the object of creating terror, 476–7 (like Tydeus' shield-bells, 384–6: n.); similarly Aeschylus fr. 326 'colts with pipe-shaped mouth-pieces'. No representation of such a device has been found in art, however. *in barbaric fashion*: i.e. exotic in Greek eyes, again like Tydeus' bells [*fashion* in 463 is suspect to editors, as an invader from 465; so 'measure, strain' is

conjectured, viz. ‘sound a barbaric strain’, or ‘din’, the word which appears in Eteocles’ answer at 476].

466–8 *man in armour*: no doubt using his shield for protection against missiles. Scaling ladders are described at this same attack upon Thebes in Euripides, *Suppliants* 497 and *Phoenician Women* 180–1 and 488–9; and also in the fifth century in historians, e.g. Thucydides 3.23.1. *lettered syllables*: traditionally the invention of the mythical Palamedes (as in Euripides’ fragmentary play of that name), but probably from his patron the demi-god Prometheus, who claims them too, *PB* 460. Cf. ‘letters of gold’, 434.

473–4 *his boast consists in his two hands*: he will not boast with words, his actions will show his proud worth; the same idea at 554. *Megareus*: although of prime Theban descent (*the Sown Men*, 412 and n.), his name is recorded elsewhere only at Soph. *Antigone* 1303, and incidentally. *Creon*: regent at Thebes after Oedipus’ exposure as parricide, and king again after the deaths of Eteocles and Polynices (the inauthentic ending to our play has ‘the people’ as the sole authority, 1005–6, 1025; but cf. Soph. *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone*). [The line omitted after 471 is obviously interpolated, roughly, ‘I would send this man at once, and with some good fortune’. Some editors delete also 473.]

475–6 *whinnying and din*: 463–4 and n. *he will go out from the gates*: meeting his opponent, not waiting for him (but cf. the Scout at 436).

477 *repay...for his upbringing*: all felt this obligation to their parents, but here and at 548 to their country as well—unlike Polynices, 584–6, 668. Eteocles stressed this duty at 16–20.

478–9 *the two men*: another sardonic joke (cf. 445 and n.): Megareus will *take*, that is, ‘kill’, the shield’s bearer, and ‘take’ the armed man and the city fashioned on it (466) as spoil. *glorify...his father’s house*: an Epic idea, the son’s heroism replicating and enhancing the father’s; failure in this is feared at Soph. *Ajax* 464–5.

485 *Zeus the punisher*: similarly at *Supp.* 401–4 Zeus watches over both bad and good men, punishing appropriately.

486–8 *Athena Onca*: 164 and n. *Hippomedon*: either brother or nephew of Adrastus (50 n.), and a native of Lerna near Argos where he became an ancestor-hero with cult. His huge size is noted also in Eur. *Phoenicians* 127–30.

489–90 *orb*: a rather grand word, used of the circumference of sun or moon; since Aeschylus half-apologizes for it (*I mean*: cf. 609), he must want it to imply a shield suiting its large bearer. *I trembled... I will not deny it*: the only explicit personal reaction in all the Scout's reports.

493–4 *Typhon*: a Titan, a monstrous but unsuccessful challenger of Zeus' supremacy, brought low by his lightning (425 n.), 517, *PB* 351–72 (n.); incarcerated fittingly under the volcanic Mt. Etna, *PB* 363–5 (one of several back-aetiologies for its swirling fires: Greek *-typho* means 'storm', whence our 'typhoon'); so he is 'the power under the earth', 522 below. *smoke... fire's changeful sister*: flame flickers amid smoke; for the 'kenning' cf. *Ag.* 494 'dust, mud's thirsty sister and neighbour'. *cried out triumphantly*: see 268–9 n.

495–6 *coiling snakes... shield*: art showed Typhon with snakes round his waist; presumably therefore Typhon filled the shield's centre, and snakes at least the lower part of its convex face, if not the whole rim as the wording seems to imply.

497–500 *maenad*: Hippomedon's loud onrush is like that of a bacchant, a frenzied female devotee of Dionysus ranging open land; 'maenad' in less forceful metaphor 836, *Supp.* 564. *looking terror*: cf. 500; similarly Typhon himself at *PB* 355–6. *Terror*: the personification (45 and n.) is very striking after the plain noun in 498.

501–3 *like a fierce serpent kept from nestlings*: the image also at 291–4 (n.); 'serpent' exploits Hippomedon's snake-device (495); cf. Tydeus' snake, 381.

504–8 *Hyperbius*: known in mythology only from this play, like the next Theban defender Actor (555); his name may mean 'Superior Force', as Actor's means 'Leader'. *trusty son*: wording as in 407. *in the stress of fortune*: he will fight to discover his fate, but ultimately fortune will decide the hard battle; cf. Melanippus' fate subject to the dicing of Ares the war-god, 414 (n.), Lasthenes' fate as god's gift, 625, and Eteocles' fatalism about himself, 699, 702, 719. *Hermes... with good reason*: the god guides all encounters, fortunate or unfortunate (*Supp.* 920); here both men and devices are esp. suited in their opposition (509–13), but the devices point clearly to victory for one (515–20).

512–13 *Zeus... set standing upright*: poised to hurl his bolt, which he cannot do while 'seated firmly' (an alternative translation). [A majority of MSS read 'bearing thunderbolt in hand'. After 513 the verse-lines seem disordered and duplicated. 514 is generally ejected, 'And no one yet of course saw Zeus defeated', but sometimes transferred to follow 517, where it is lame; 519

cannot stand before 520; it is variously placed, or deleted, by both MSS and editors. There is no certainty about the order adopted by West (translated), and some editors argue that ‘it is probable’ in 519 should be translated ‘it is fitting’ if 518 precedes it.]

515 *That is the nature, etc.*: matter-of-fact, or sardonic?

518 *at least if Zeus is mightier*: ‘is’ looks forward to the conflict of the shield-gods; the verb is lacking in the Greek (idiomatically) but implied by the context. Eteocles knows that in the mythical conflict Zeus ‘was’ mightier.

521–5 *evil power now under the earth*: Typhon, 493–4 n. *semblance*: both living men and gods detest any representation of the now invisible monster. *he’ll smash his head down*: in death. The expression is anomalous, heads being smashed usually by opponents, e.g. *LB* 396.

526–8 The fifth attacker goes unnamed until 547, but the audience would quickly guess his name (Parthenopaeus: ‘Maiden-boy’) from the reference to his parents and his good-looking, boyish appearance in 532–6; see also 547–9 n. *Borraean (gates)*: i.e. ‘Northern’ (from ‘Boreas’); but the name may be Aeschylus’ invention. *Amphion*: builder of the Theban citadel together with his twin Zethus; they were sons of Zeus. One or both had a tomb outside the walls; its existence and location were disputed in antiquity: see Map 4.

529–52 [Vestiges of these lines stand in a second century AD papyrus.]

532–5 *Ares*: Parthenopaeus’ father is jointly the war-god and the mortal Melanion (a famous hunter, like Atlanta *his mother the frequenter of mountains*); such double parentage is not unique, Heracles, for example, being son to both Zeus and Amphitryon. Aeschylus names Ares here, prominently, to verify the son’s prowess in war, 545–9 [*Ares*’ is a conjecture. The MSS are confused: most have ‘of Zeus’, but the papyrus and a few manuscripts have ‘of the spear’.]

536 *in no way girlish like his name*: etymological play yet again; cf. 526–8 n., and e.g. 403–5 and n.

541–4 *the Sphinx*: this monster, winged, with a lion’s body (but scaly) and a girl’s face, tormented Thebes after king Laius disregarded Apollo’s oracle and got a son, Oedipus. She devoured a Theban each day while her famous riddle remained unsolved; Oedipus solved it (775 ff.) before or after he killed his father unknowingly in a quarrel, and was rewarded with the throne and Laius’ widow, his own mother, as wife. When his parricide and incest were laid bare, he cursed his progeny, 723–5, 785–90, etc. (see also *Introd.* 2.2

p. xxix). *for the most missiles to strike this man*: for symbol to turn into reality (cf. 478–9 n.), as defensive Theban missiles hit one of their own Thebans.

545–6 *no petty trafficking in battle*: he takes his trade abroad, like a great merchant, not a local huckster; his trading intends ‘wholesale’ slaughter; his profit will be the ransack (531). *his long road’s journey*: from Arcadia, 547–8; see 553 n.

548 *immigrant*: in Greek a ‘metic’, one who ‘changes his home’. At Athens such persons were granted formal residence in the hope they would help their new country, usually in manufacturing or trade: see n. on *Supp.* 609 (601–14).

552 *all in ruin and in all misery*: echoing formulae from treaty-terms should they be broken.

553 *This...man*, i.e. Arcadian: the emphasis is contemptuous; Arcadians were regarded as uncouth. Parthenopaeus got ‘his fine upbringing’ at Argos, 548, a detail repeated at Eur. *Suppliants* 890–8.

555 *Actor*: perhaps invented, 504 n.; in other accounts Parthenopaeus is killed by a Theban Periclymenus, e.g. Eur. *Phoenician Women* 1157.

558–61 *monster*: Greek ‘biting thing’, used of any dangerous creature, even of the husband-killing Clytemnestra at Ag. 1232. *constant battering*: Eteocles hopes sardonically for a different effect from the blows intended to fall on the shield-Sphinx’s victim (544 n.). [After 558 *to pass* most editors delete 559 ‘bearing an image on his hostile shield’, a line which weakly duplicates 560 ‘with her bearer’.]

563–7. *His words go through my breast*: the Scout’s description of Parthenopaeus pierces home; cf. LB 380 ‘that went sharply right through my ears’. *hair...on end*: cf. LB 32, the effect on others of Clytemnestra’s screaming nightmare. *great boasting*: 452. *if gods are gods*: cf. *Supp.* 86–7 ‘Zeus’ desire, if Zeus’ it really is’, Soph. *Oedipus at Colonus* 623 ‘if Zeus is still Zeus’. *in our land*: that is, ‘I wish they all die here, with no return home’. The plots of Aeschylus’ lost *Eleusinians* and of Euripides’ surviving *Suppliants* concerned the recovery of their unburied bodies from Thebes (49–53 n.).

568–9 *most prudent*: this headline adjective is a powerful surprise after the crazy boasts of the other attackers. *Amphiaraus*: a complex figure, a seer by descent (382 n.), and thus awkwardly prescient of his own future, a great warrior but ‘excellent in wisdom and dear to the gods’ (Hesiod fr. 25.38). Foreseeing his death at Thebes, he tried vainly to avoid implication in the wrongful attack (Eteocles at 597–619); he foretells that he will be swallowed

up in the earth (588, allusively; narrated at Eur. *Suppliants* 500–1). Indeed he enjoyed cult as an underworld power at Thebes (587–9 again; Pindar, *Olympians* 6.13 ff., Herodotus 1.52, 8.134.1), and had an oracle at nearby Oropus (Pausanias 1.34.3). His portrait here has a special function in the play: see Introd. 2.2 p. xxxii. In short: he will be destroyed with his evil companions (597–614), approximately as Eteocles, the virtuous defender of the city, will have no escape from the consequences of his father Oedipus' curse (574) through his brother Polynices' treachery (653–75).

570 *Homoloid Gates*: the name is not certainly identified or understood: it may reflect a cult-title of Zeus at Thebes, or come from a daughter of Niobe (so an ancient commentator), or a Theban hero Homolous (an ancient commentator on Eur. *Phoenician Women* 1119), or a mountain towards which the gates looked.

571–5 *Tydeus . . . teacher of evil to Argos*: like Polynices he came to Argos from exile; king Adrastus married them both to daughters, and they persuaded him to attack Thebes (573). From the *Iliad* onwards Tydeus is thuggish, aggressive, and bloodthirsty (574, cf. 380, 592–3, and n. on Melanippus at 407–13); so he is *Fury's Summoner*. Aeschylus names this Athenian legal officer who summoned a witness to court, often from abroad: so Tydeus either summons the Fury himself to witness his murderous work, or is the Fury's summoner before she brings it on, precipitating destruction for Thebes and Eteocles through Oedipus' curse and Fury, 70, etc.

576–8 *your brother . . . his name*: one of the most disputed passages in Aeschylus; both text and translation are everywhere in doubt. The essence of it is, however, clear: Amphiaraus is punning on Polynices' name, Greek *poly-* + *neik-*, 'great' + 'quarrel(er)': Polynices quarrels with his brother Eteocles, and Aeschylus repeats the wordplay at 658, 830, and possibly 935–6; cf. esp. Eur. *Phoenician Women* 636–7. [In 576 *addresses . . . your brother*, I have substituted a conjecture for corrupt MSS wording which West leaves obelized. In 577, *his eyes turned up in contempt* is doubted because the small action, although conventional, seems incongruous with the violent abuse; some alter 'eyes' to 'name' and translate differently as 'reversing his name', i.e. Greek *neik-* + *poly-*, 'quarrelling greatly'; others make the wordplay explicit by giving the verb *dwelling on* a different sense, 'dividing the name', i.e. into its two Greek parts, 'the great quarreller' (cf. above). In 578 West abandons the MSS *at the end . . . twice* for a conjecture 'with a twofold ending' which suggests Polynices as both 'the great quarreller' and 'the great abuser' (or 'object of abuse'); the Greek can have both meanings.]

579 *These words pass his lips in speech*: the redundant expression conveys the solemn significance of the seer's condemnation. [The line is sometimes deleted by those who 'emend' 576–8, because the verb 'calls to' which begins it (576 here) destroys the new syntax they introduce.]

580–9 The only 'direct speech' in all seven of the Scout's reports. It is Aeschylus' way of emphasizing its context, anticipatory condemnation of the traitor Polynices. Eteocles does not respond to it when naming Amphiaraus' opponent, but only when he has heard the Scout's description of Polynices' shield-device, in 658–71 answering 642–8.

583 *an army of outsiders*: such an army has no legitimacy in the dynastic conflict at Thebes; cf. 922–5 and the imitative 1019.

584–6 *the life-source of a mother*: i.e. Polynices' motherland, Thebes; cf. Eteocles wording in 16; it is not a metaphor for just the nurturing rivers of Thebes, 308–11.

587–9 *enrich (this land)*: while the verb plays on the idea of life-giving land in 584, Amphiaraus means rather the rich benefit to Thebes of his future cult (above, 568–9 n.); cf. Oedipus' burial in Athenian soil in Soph. *Oedipus at Colonus* 1520 ff. *To battle, then!*: abrupt; Aeschylus wants to emphasize the combination in one man, untroubled by prophetic self-knowledge (590), of deep wisdom (593–4) and supreme courage (592, 569).

591–4 *No device, etc.*: the absence further distinguishes Amphiaraus from the five preceding and boastful attackers. *not the appearance*: he will have no false ostentation on his shield. *crops the deep furrow... grows*: the imagery of soil and yield (585, 587) takes a further metaphorical turn; it recurs in 600. Cf. also *Pers.* 821–2, the same image of (bad) counsel; 'deep' counsel 142 there, *Supp.* 407.

595–6 *the man who honours god, etc.*: a final distinction between Amphiaraus and the rest: contrast Capaneus 440, Eteocles 469, Hyperbius 509–20, Parthenopaeus 551.

597 *Ominous, etc.*: Eteocles begins with and concentrates upon Amphiaraus' piety and morality, which draw his strong sympathy, for a good man is often doomed to suffer innocently with the bad. Cf. 568–9 n., at end. The word *ominous* alludes also to Amphiaraus' powers as a seer (569, 588).

600 [*a crop not to be taken in*: followed in the MSS by 601, an interpolated line seemingly intended to amplify the imagery and which is insecurely translated as '(for) the ploughland of ruinous folly reaps death as its crop'; the Greek is anomalous in expression.]

603 *sailors hot upon some villainy*: lit. ‘hot sailors and some villainy’, apparently a bold hendiadys [but the text has been doubted].

604 *a breed of men the gods abhor*: perhaps an anticipation of Eteocles’ own fate: cf. his 653, 691.

607–8 *net*: catching the fated victim, deservedly or not, like Cassandra at Ag. 1048, Agamemnon at LB 998, *Eum.* 460. *the god’s impartial scourge*: that of Zeus, the image as Homer, *Iliad* 12.37, etc., Ag. 642.

609–14 An impressive sequence of words and ideas, some deliberately repetitious, most deliberately reflecting those of 598–608; it culminates in a sonorous seven-syllable Greek verb, *he shall be dragged down with them. son of Oicles*: 382 n. *stretch their mission too far to return*: apparently sardonic, but the Greek expression translates with difficulty [‘pressing a mission where the return is lengthy’ is conjectured]. The mission will end in destruction, 614~608~604.

615–16 *not from lack of heart, etc.*: the Scout’s judgement of Amphiaraus at 589, 592; contrast Tydeus’ judgement at 382–3.

619 *what hits the mark*: a set phrase, translated in l. 1 as ‘what meets the moment’, cf. also 65 and e.g. *Supp.* 446, LB 582; here is it a euphemism for ‘what is inevitable’. Apollo’s prophetic voice always hits the mark, for he speaks only of certainties: LB 269–70, *Eum.* 615–18 in the *Oresteia*. [Many scholars apply the phrase and the line to the human prophet Amphiaraus, prescient of his imminent death, 587–8, 617; some delete the line altogether.]

620–4 *Lasthenes*: perhaps an invented name; it means ‘People’s Strength’. Lasthenes’ portrait is confined to his prowess in arms (like Actor’s, 553–7); because Amphiaraus has no boast on his shield, or moral failing stated (on the contrary), no contrast is required in his designated opponent. *enemy to outsiders*: potential foes; the same word as in 606 ‘hostile to guests’, but less pejorative here. [Individual words in these lines are doubted, esp. *growth*, but it is supported by a papyrus text.]

625 *Yet men’s success, etc.*: Eteocles ends with a seeming retreat from confidence; he means perhaps not that Lasthenes’ success, as a mere mortal man, may be uncertain, despite Amphiaraus’ own certainty that he himself will die, but that everything at Thebes is in the gods’ gift: 719.

631–719 The play’s crisis, analysed at Introd. 2.2. pp. xxx–xxxiii, with particular attention to Eteocles’ speech 653–76.

631–5 *the seventh gates*: the only ones unnamed or unlocated, so that all emphasis falls on the seventh encounter, known to be the last; for ‘seventh, last, and implicitly most important’ cf. *Pers.* 778, and n. on 800 below. *crying out joyously*: a term from cult, associated esp. with the welcome accorded by ecstatic celebrants to a divine advent: grim, ironic humour for this fatal combat (636, 655, 689, etc.). *victory-hymn*: Iphigenia sang one for her father Agamemnon against Troy, before he left home: *Ag.* 247, cf. also 268–9 n. above. [After 633 West rightly follows some editors in deleting 634 ‘after mounting the walls and being proclaimed to the land’, a line which contradicts fact: he has not yet entered the gates.] *for yourself*: begins Polynices’ invocation emphatically: Eteocles is the sole object of his vengeance. [*with living exile... with expulsion*: sense secure, but text insecure because anomalous in expression.]

642–8 Polynices’ device is starkly plain in meaning; it emphasizes the issue of ‘justice’ between the brothers, taken up by Eteocles at 662, 667, 671; cf. Amphiaraus at 584. *the letters*: cf. 434 n. *possess his father’s city and the freedom of his house*: exactly the fugitive matricide Orestes’ future when released from the Furies’ persecution, *Eum.* 754–8.

649–52 *Those have been the devices these men, etc.*: Aeschylus has the Scout complete his *reports* by referring briefly to the devices of all the attackers; but he finishes allusively by urging Eteocles to choose just one opponent, implicitly for Polynices: the Greek makes this clear with the singular relative pronoun *whom* (I have added *against Polynices* in the translation for clarity). *steer the city’s course*: the image with which Eteocles himself began the play, 2–3; the Scout used it too in 62–4. He says ‘I have done my job without fault (651–2): now do yours!’ [The sudden awkwardness in 650 of *and you yourself must now decide*, but esp. the duplication between it and 652 of *but you yourself must decide*, induce many editors to delete 650 (West does not); the deletion also avoids an unwanted interruption between ‘devices’ and ‘reports’. At the end of 652 a damaged papyrus text appears to attest either ‘steer (your) fatherland’s course’ or ‘steer your course back again’ (i.e. to safety).]

653–5 *Oh, the family of Oedipus, etc.*: an impassioned outburst, almost lyric in intensity; this opening and the whole tenor of Eteocles’ speech resemble a soliloquy. Laius’ disregard of Apollo in fathering Oedipus (741–6: see n.; 842) is not described in this play as madness, but both Oedipus’ marriage to his mother and his later cursing of his sons are (725, 756, 781): Aeschylus puts this idea firmly in Eteocles’ mouth (*family of Oedipus, and mine*), and the Chorus will go on to accuse him of madness himself, 686–7. *their great*

detestation: Eteocles again at 691: *now my father's curses ... fulfilment*: unmistakably heralding Eteocles' intention to oppose his brother himself (672–5); the idea recurs at once in 659, then e.g. 724.

656–7 *give birth to*: a common metaphor, e.g. *Supp.* 498, 770. *grief even harder to bear*: that of Thebes, Eteocles means, if he fails to save it even at the cost of fratricide.

658–61 *This man so well named, Polynices*: 576–8 and n. *wittering of wandering wits*: the Greek has a deliberate alliteration, conveying Eteocles' contempt.

662–71 *Justice the maiden daughter of Zeus*: the paternity is as old as Hesiod, *Works and Days* 256–8. With the etymological play on her name as Zeus' daughter in 670–1 (also *LB* 949–51), Eteocles distinguishes the true Justice from the false one on Polynices' shield, 646. *this might perhaps now be so*: this concession is only a foil to the utter dismissal which follows.

675–6 *greaves ... protection against spear and arrow*: surprising to us, but apparently accurate to reality: the lower legs, difficult to protect with a shield, were a favoured target, to bring a man down. The greaves were put on first, before body-armour, so that Eteocles means that combat is imminent for himself; perhaps attendants brought on all his armour to underline his final exchange with the Chorus.

677 *No! Dearest of men, etc.*: the first words spoken, not sung, by the Chorus since 369–74.

678–80 *that ill-named one*: Polynices again, 658. This translation, rather than 'that one you have spoken ill of', seems indicated by *It is enough, etc.*

682 *no old age for this pollution*: it remains ever fresh, beyond cleansing, cf. 734–9, *LB* 71–4. The expression is typical of folk-wisdom; cf. Eteocles again at 685 (n.), 719, perhaps indicating stress.

683–5 *If someone really, etc.*: i.e. 'Let me at least die in battle', the soldier's best chance of fame (first at Homer, *Iliad* 12.322–8, *Odyssey* 24.93–4). Eteocles' hope for glory is that of saving Thebes; for his *profit*, cf. his 697. By *someone* is meant Polynices (the indefinite pronoun alludes to an enemy only too obvious; cf. 402 n.), rather than some anonymous god (despite 689). *you'll not speak, etc.*: 682 n. [but the text and translation are insecure].

686–711 The Chorus sing in the most excited of Greek lyric metres, dochmiacs (n. on 78–181). They are appalled and desperate to avert the fratricide; they urge patience upon Eteocles. He answers their alarm in speech, his

four triplets measuring out acceptance of his inevitable fate. For this further ‘epirrhetic structure’, see 182–286 n.

686 *my son*: a conventional form of address by a chorus, in any mood. *mad ruin*: often personified, e.g. 957, *Pers.* 1007; it is the destructive agent in the house of Atreus in the *Oresteia*, Ag. 386, LB 1076, etc.

689–91 *Since a god...hurries, etc.*: there is no escape, 719. *line of Laius detested by Apollo*: possibly an allusion to Laius’ offence to the gods in abducting the beautiful boy Chysippus (an ancient commentator on Eur. *Phoenician Women* 1760), and almost certainly echoing an emphasis lost to us in the first two plays of the trilogy (see Introd. 2.2 p. xxix and n. 23); 745–8 give only the regular detail that Laius disregarded an oracle of Apollo in fathering Oedipus; but for ‘detested’ cf. Eteocles at 653. *along with the wind*: accelerating a movement already irresistible, also 854. *Cocytus’ wave*: the irresistible flow of Hades’ river (Ag. 1160); its name means ‘Wailing’. Laius’ line is doomed to extinction, the ‘bitter fruit’ of 693–4: see 720.

692–4 *perform*: a term from cult-practice, blackly ironic in implication here; again at 782. *unlawful*: the Greek word registers the prime offence, to the gods.

695–7 *my own father’s*: the Greek has these words enclosing *my enemy*, an effect of rhetoric rather than accuracy: Eteocles lamented his descent from Oedipus in 654. *dry, unweeping eyes*: at 653–5 Eteocles had described the curse’s effect as ‘all the tears to shed’; here he must mean that he himself is beyond tears. *earlier death as profit over later*: that of death without disgrace on the field (684), against one later which might prove shameful. [*black (curse)* is a conjecture, cf. 832, ‘black Fury’ 988]; it is supported too by ‘black’ in 699 ‘the Fury cloaked in black storm’. The MSS have a form of the verb ‘perform’ which has invaded from 693 and which West leaves obelized.]

699–701 *Fury cloaked in black storm*: lit. ‘Fury in her black aegis’, the potent tasselled shawl-like goatskin distinguishing esp. the goddess Athena (whose rapid flight, like that of the Fury here, it signifies at *Eum.* 406); but the word *aegis* means also ‘storm-wind’ (LB 593). *get your hands’ sacrifice*: the hands are unspecified in the Greek [and the expression therefore doubted], but only Eteocles himself could offer sacrifice, as his question in 704 makes plain, ‘Why then should I still fawn, etc?’.

703 *favour*: this noun is used of any sacrifice, so that its connotation of ‘death’ is grimly ironic.

705 *mood*: the gods have this human disposition also at *Supp.* 364. [Wait: West's conjecture for MSS 'Now', which lacks syntax; he supports it from 714 'Don't take this road, etc.']

706–8 *late veer...changeable...breath, etc.*: the winds of human fortune changing as the god wills are a common metaphor, e.g. *LB* 1067; the image is renewed from 689–90 'hurries...along with the wind' and 699 'storm'. *storm...boiling*: English too uses this metaphor of the sea; note how it is immediately taken up in 709.

710 *dreams...all too true*: Eteocles has mentioned no dream, but he may have feared the division of Oedipus' wealth by fratricidal sword, 727–30, 788–90; cf. *Introd.* 2.2. p. xxxi n. 25. For dreams and inevitability in Tragedy, cf. *Pers.* 176–200 and see *Introd.* 2.1 p. xxvi n. 14.

711–19 Stichomythic form makes this last, brief, and hopeless exchange most effective (see *Introd.* 3.2 p. lxi).

712–13 *women...although you have no love for them*: Eteocles at 260–4 was rude and impatient with them, before he knew the attackers; now he foresees his fate, he is coldly but briskly polite.

716–17 *victory...even if ignobly won*: the Chorus mean, if they can dissuade Eteocles from the duel; but in 717 he chooses to hear the Chorus literally. A similar conceit at *Ag.* 942–3, when Clytemnestra persuades Agamemnon to walk on the spread purples.

718 *reap...blood*: a vigorous if not unparalleled image, e.g. *Supp.* 637; it may take up the Chorus' 'bitter fruit' of 694.

719 *if the gods give it*: cf. Eteocles at 562 'if the gods will it', but there more hopefully. *you can't escape*: fatalism expressed uncomfortably in an everyday 'second person' axiom; cf. 281 and n.

720–91 Second ode: the history of Oedipus' curse upon his sons. Anxiety that the father's Fury may now divide the sons' inheritance with the sword (720–40) prefaces the account of how Laius fathered Oedipus in defiance of Apollo's oracle that any child would destroy his line (741–9). Oedipus duly became a parricide and the incestuous father of Eteocles and Polynices upon his own mother (750–7); earlier he had reached a zenith of material prosperity, after overcoming the Sphinx (772–7), but on discovering the truth he launched the curse in frenzied despair (778–91). Thus the history is narrated but, in a manner anticipating the *Oresteia*, Aeschylus prefaces Oedipus' prosperity with a moral question: whether prosperity itself predisposes a man to disaster (758–71); indeed the same questioning concludes the

Agamemnon's narrative of Troy's ruin, Ag. 750–82. We are in great difficulty to assess both the details narrated here and the background to the question (which is not taken further here) because we have lost both the earlier plays of the trilogy: see Introd. 2.2 p. xxix. A familiar kind of dramaturgical issue also arises from this ode: if the Chorus had such knowledge of Oedipus' curse, why did they not caution Eteocles against fulfilling it (they did not hear his 69–70)? Both question and answer are as irrelevant to Aeschylus' purpose as those concerning Oedipus' seeming ignorance of how and where Laius was killed in Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 697 ff. Aeschylus is obeying the needs of his drama, not of real life; cf. n. on *Pers.* 681–851.

The Greek metres are not as varied as in the first ode, but the first pair of stanzas has ionic rhythm, associated with high solemnity (see nn. on *Pers.* 65–101 and 647–702): the Chorus are gravely alarmed, but resigned.

720–3 *I shudder that the goddess... may fulfil, etc.*: repeated almost exactly when this ode ends, 790–1; much of these lines is echoed also in 941–5 (note too how 723 and 791 bracket the whole ode with the *Fury's* name). *goddess unlike gods... the Fury*: cf. *Eum.* 69–70, 350, 360, the Fury's enforced separation from the Olympian gods. *destroyer of houses*: of criminal ones, *Eum.* 354–5, 421. The string of uncoordinated descriptions is almost matched in the responding stanza at 728–30; for this style, cf. also 916–18, and particularly Ag. 738–43.

725–6 *demented Oedipus*: conscious of, but unhinged by, his catastrophe (778–80), he cursed his sons in frenzy (781–7); cf. n. on 653–5. *destroying sons*: echoing 'destroyer of houses', 720.

727–30 *the portions*: the Athenians' term for official allocations of land, applied with bleak irony in 731–3; for the figurative language, see Introd. 2.2. p. xxxiv. *Chalybian*: a people near the south shore of the Black Sea, famed for their work with iron, *PB* 715 (where, as here and in 817, they are loosely located in *Scythia*). *Iron*: the metal personified, as in 944; it is often used in metonymy as 'sword', e.g. 788, 817, 883. For 'iron' imagery in the play, see also Introd. 2.2 p. xxxiv.

732–3 *these great plains*: fertile Boeotia (304–9), the source of royal Theban wealth (730). [The text and syntax of 732 are suspect to many editors.]

735–8 *Once... earth has drunk... who is to give expiation... release?*: questions to be repeated amid the family killings of the *Oresteia*, Ag. 1018–21, *LB* 48. *provide them with release*: so that the pollution does not follow them into Hades, for the Furies persecute after death, *Eum.* 324–40; cf. Clytemnestra's

ghost 95–8 there [this wording is inferred from the ancient commentator; the MSS offer ‘who is to wash the blood away’].

739 *harsh new*: ‘harsh’ is idiomatically implicit in the Greek, where *new* is emphasized through the heavy juxtaposition of *ancient*.

744–5 *its penalty swift... to the third generation*: the penalty has followed the transgressions of Laius and Oedipus already and is now certain for the brothers cursed with fratricide, just as Agamemnon must pay for his accursed father Atreus’ crime (Ag. 1580–2) with one of his own which brings his death.

745–9 *the world’s navel*: Delphi, *Eum.* 167. *thrice... without issue*: deliberately ‘oracular’ language; for the power of the number three, see n. on 43–8. This happens to be the earliest surviving version of Apollo’s oracle to Laius; later e.g. Soph. *Oedipus Tyrannus* 711–14.

750 *folly*: the idea returns in 802, 842; but translation of the adjective *pleasing* is insecure, even if it attractively suggests an over-ready self-gratification in Laius’ disobedience. West himself offers ‘foolish fondness’, which reverses the Greek emphasis, others ‘his dear ones’ folly’, alluding to his complicit wife [or editors emend the text to create this last meaning with ‘by his dear ones, foolishly’].

753–4 *his mother’s sacred tilth*: i.e. forbidden, to prevent incest. The imagery of ‘ploughland’ in conception is commonplace, e.g. *Supp.* 637.

756–7 *foolhardy! Insanity, etc.*: harsh condemnation of the helpless transgression, mitigated only a little by accompanying madness; the idea is potent in the *Oresteia*, e.g. Ag. 218–25, Agamemnon’s sacrificial killing of his daughter Iphigenia, where the word-root in ‘foolhardy’ is used three times with subtle variations of meaning from ‘hard’ to ‘(foolhardy) audacity’.

758–61 *waves of trouble*: another commonplace image, e.g. *Supp.* 127, *PB* 886, here combining with that of danger for the ship of state; see next n.

762–3 *wall*: cf. 216, 234, the city’s wall ‘keeping out’ the enemy; the verb there is appropriate also to a ship’s sides keeping out water; and so 795–7 below, 208–10 and n. [A senseless MSS text is variously repaired by editors; *of narrow width* is wholly uncertain as an emendation.]

766–71 Exceedingly difficult lines. Text and interpretation are disputed, but the general moralization in 769–71 (*The prosperity... from the stern*) makes it clear that 766–8 are general too, about any inescapable curse, not specifically that of Oedipus (which comes in at 785). The imagery of 767 *settlement* seems to be from money: when ‘payment’ of the curse falls due, its harshness

cannot be deflected; with 'settlement' (also 908) I translate a term taken by many to imply reconciliation. The Chorus appear to vary their assumption of the inevitable: the duel of the brothers is now certain, but not yet its outcome; the curse will be hard to stop. [So West's text. In other reconstructions, 766 *fulfilled* is translated as 'final', as if no avoidance can be expected; but 'fulfilled' for Oedipus' curse appears also in 832, after the deaths are announced.]

769–71 *prosperity...fatted to excess must jettison all*: a message repeated with the same imagery from a cargo in Ag. 1008–14 (jettison some to save the rest—as the Atreid line is saved in the end); but here safety is hardly foreseen for Oedipus' line, despite his unexampled success with the Sphinx, 772–7.

772–7 *who...had such esteem...as...Oedipus?*—and fell so far?, ask Pindar, *Olympians* 1.54 and Soph. *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1186–1222. *gods that share the altars here*: 251.

777 *snatcher of our men*: the Sphinx, 539–41 n.

778–91 These lines are marked by a number of verbal repetitions, echoes, and resemblances between the two stanzas, although there are no exact correspondences in position.

778–84 More very difficult lines. *fully conscious of his dreadful marriage*: recovering from the delusive madness in which he entered it, 756–7. *the two evil acts*: parricide and incest with his mother (752–4), the second a consequence of the first—even if both were done in ignorance, 541–4 n. *performed*: for the connotation of this verb see the n. on 693. [West's text rests on this interpretation of *the two acts he had performed* and on his conjecture in 784 *from better judgement*, but is very plausible. Earlier editors had kept MSS 'he performed (or 'fulfilled') two evil acts' in 782, and tried to retain in 784 a mixture of strongly doubted MSS readings and conjectures which gave 'lost his eyes (*or house*) which were superior to children'; then *the two evil acts* were the hideous self-blinding and the pronouncement of the curse itself.]

785–91 *they had not sustained him*: in his blindness; but this is an approximation to the sense, not a translation, for the text of 785–6 is uncertain. The sixth century BC epic poem *Thebais* (very fragmentary) told how Oedipus' sons sent him only poor meat from sacrificial animals, a dereliction of their duty to support a parent and an insult to his royalty. This must have been after his 'evil acts' were revealed (782 and n.). Others have understood the Greek to mean that his anger was for his sons' 'very conception', incestuous:

perhaps, and it may not matter that the equally wretched daughters were not cursed too. [In offering this approximate meaning, I have not translated at all the corrupt word in 785 which appears to duplicate *curses*, and which West leaves obelized.] *divide his possessions with swords of iron in hand*: again at 944–6. *swift-running*: lit. ‘leg-flexing’, a detail matching artistic representations of a pursuing *Fury*; this significant name is given the final, emphatic place in stanza and ode, as in the *Oresteia* at Ag. 748, cf. 59; cf. Ares at 344 above and 910.

792–819 *s.d.*: The Scout: for his identity as the ‘messenger’ see the n. on the *hypothesis*, p. 160.

Thebes is saved, but Eteocles and Polynices have now killed each other. The scene repeats the curse’s origin in Laius’ disobedience of Apollo (800–2: 743–52) and the division of Oedipus’ property with the sword (816–17: 727–30, 788–90)—but it is the Scout, not the Chorus, who says these things. This different emphasis upon them indicates that the scene prepares concisely for the extended lamentation which now ends the play, and the trilogy: see 822–1004 and n.

792–4 *escaped slavery*: a constant anxiety, 75; cf. 253–4 n. *high and mighty*: translates a single Homeric adjective, applied to Ares the god of war at *Iliad* 5.845. [*noble*: West’s conjecture; the MSS have ‘daughters reared by (your) mothers’, unconvincingly interpreted as ‘timid because sheltered by your mothers’ (cf. their fear at 78, 182–90, etc.). Some editors suppose the loss of a whole line amplifying the phrase.]

796 *the city has let in no water*: the imagery of 762–3 (n.). The Greek here shows a typical resort to contrast for emphasis where one term (*calm*) is both otiose and unapt; cf. 197 n.

800–2 *leader of all sevens*: a cult ‘title’ not elsewhere recorded but modelled on others registering the god’s sphere, e.g. ‘leader of the Muses’. Myth had Apollo born ‘on the seventh day’ of the month (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 770–1); his festivals were usually held on that day. Aeschylus wishes to emphasize the seventh gate as the site for the fratricidal duel and the end of Laius’ male line which became inevitable when he defied Apollo’s command to save his city by dying without issue (745, cf. 618). The Greek line is impressively sonorous, adding to this effect. *ancient folly of Laius*: 750.

803–10 A further very brief stichomythia (like 712–19), this time with the function of securing more information. [Its regularity is destroyed by the interpolated line 804 ‘The city is saved; and the royal brothers’; 804 is almost identical with the similarly interpolated 820: see 816–19 n.]

805 *The men are dead, etc.* and 806 *Who?*: the Scout seems reluctant, even evasive, with the truth after the transparent 800–2; but Aeschylus accommodates the revelation to the Chorus’ extreme anxiety (note the Scout’s initial ‘Take heart!’, 792).

809 *felled*: lit. ‘made (down) into ash’, a vigorous metaphor for physical and mental battering; of a severe storm, Ag. 670.

811–12 *too closely kin in blood*: a similar grim wordplay at 940, cf. also 974, 984 [but the phrase is a conjecture here, replacing MSS ‘brotherly’, to accommodate *too* more effectively. Even so 811–12 remain very weak lines, and editors have made many changes in trying to restore idiom and logic to them]. *the demon*: again at 960, the remorseless spirit of destruction infesting the house of Laius; at 705 it was translated as ‘the divine power’, not quite equated with the Fury of 700; possibly it was mentioned in one or other of the preceding two lost plays. Aeschylus has a similar ‘demon’ haunt the house of Atreus, persecuting it through inherited criminality, in the *Oresteia*, e.g. Ag. 769, 1468, 1501. Some, however, translate as ‘the god’, i.e. Apollo, who indeed *consumed the ill-fated family* (801–2); while this translation seems false to Aeschylus’ use of the particular Greek noun, it can be supported: the Scout simply repeats his attribution of cause, without emphasizing the curse here but mentioning it at 819.

816–19 *dividing . . . burial*: recapitulating the Chorus’ own 727–33. *what land, etc.*: they get only as much soil as their corpses ‘take up’, 731–2. [This recapitulation in fact protects 815–17 against suspicion of interpolation, it does not compound it. Line 819 is followed by stronger candidates for deletion, 820–1 ‘The city is safe; the earth has drunk the blood of two sibling princes through their mutual bloodshed’; these lines weakly duplicate 804–5. West suggests that they were meant to replace all of 805–19, and that this explains the presence of 820 in clumsy adaptation of 804.]

822–1004 Lamentations conclude the play—and the trilogy. A striking aspect of them is that only the Chorus utter them, as one voice (822–60) and then as antiphonal semi-choruses (874–1004); there is no parallel in extant Tragedy. Indeed, what other voice should utter than the one which has heard and talked with Eteocles throughout his last hours? [A fabricator—or two—was nevertheless not deterred from introducing other persons, for theatrical effect if at the cost of dramaturgical harm (unless the fabrication was for a performance of this play in separation from its trilogy): see the nn. on 861–73, 996–7, 1005–77, and cf. 822–31 n.; Introd. 2.2 p. xxxv.]

First comes a reaction of ambivalence: joy for the city’s safety or tears for the royal line now extinguished (822–31), followed by bleak

recognition—once again—that the curse is fulfilled (832–47). Then the two corpses are brought in, and the Chorus rouse themselves to grief (848–60); it will be a *kommos* ('beating'), lamentation accompanied by rhythmic striking and tearing of body and dress (n. on *Persians* 908–1077); these acts are explicit in the wording throughout, and announced clearly at the start: see 854–6 and n. This *kommos* resembles that of *Persians* in becoming ever more emotional and fragmented, as the utterances shorten, and echo or take up each other, or share syntax and word-patterns; such effects are most marked after 961: see n. on 961–1004.

West numbers the paired stanzas continuously from 832, but after the prelude (822–31) and the first pair (832–47) the sequence is quite violently interrupted for a brief passage of free lyric (848–60: n.), as the bodies are brought in and the Chorus prepare themselves for the *kommos* proper. The metre of the entire sequence is heavily iambic, frequent in laments of all kinds; this rhythm closes the *Persians* too. We cannot know how the divided stanzas (from 875–960) were performed: did one semi-chorus stand silent when the other danced and sang, or were both in constant movement? In the broken short exchanges of 961–1004 such movement was certain.

822–31 A chanted prelude which summarizes the ensuing long sequence of sung and chanted lament. [In these lines *great* in 822 is suspect in its Greek form; 823 is plausibly and 830 indisputably supplemented by conjecture; in 826 the translation gives only the apparent sense, for both language and metre are at fault in the word translated as *safety*. Some editors believe all ten lines inauthentic; cf. 822–1004 n., end of the first paragraph.]

828 *who leave no children*: an aspect of the brothers' death brought up with remarkable abruptness [some editors therefore obelize the passage]. The idea of the male royal line being extinguished has, however, occurred in Eteocles' self-destructive prayers at 689–91, and in the Scout's statement at 813, and will be resumed in 953–60. Myth, however, named one son for each brother.

829–30 *rightly named*: for Eteocles 'of true glory' see n. on 458, for Polynices 'of much contention' on 576–8.

835–9 *possessed*: abandoning oneself to grief, a metaphor from an ecstatic female worshipper less forceful than at 498 (n.). *evil death... evil omen*: a wordplay typical of extreme lamentation, e.g. 912–13, 941–4. *two spears piping music as one*: the conceit is perhaps eased by preceding *I begin a chant*; and there appears to be a double allusion: their spears played the same music in their duel, and now the same lament begins over their two bodies; funeral music came from a droning pipe.

842 *Laius' disobedient resolve*: again, cf. 743–50, 802.

848 *s.d.*: the approach of the bodies is inferred from *Here* ... in 848 and *two deaths* in 850; they have been set down by 860, and the Chorus address them at once, in 874.

848–60 An interlude of quickly contrasting styles: bleak, terse sentences recognize the full tragedy, 848–53; a single elaborate one invites ritual lament, 854–60. Rhythmic beating of the mourners' hands, expressed in vocabulary common to grief and rowing (854–6), develops into detailed evocation of Charon's boat conveying the dead across Hades' river *Acheron* (a picture similar to that at Eur. *Alcestis* 252–4, 361). [All this is generally clear from a Greek text nevertheless extremely insecure in 849–53 and 857–8, where all editors differ in diagnosis and conjecture.]

853–60 *go along with the wind*: 690 (n.), the destruction of Laius' line. *beat* is lit. 'row with oars', used of the regular beating of the body in grief also at *Pers.* 1046; *steering* is lit. 'conveying by ship'. *the mission ... its canvas black*: black is of course the colour of death (e.g. *Pers.* 1052), but there is here an allusion to Athens' black-sailed ship sent annually to Apollo's sacred island Delos, commemorating the mythical boat which bore fourteen Athenian boys and girls as victims for the Cretan king Minos' Minotaur, and honouring the god for saving them. *the dry shore which Healer Apollo may not tread*: a conventional evocation of Hades' joyless dark; the god's bright and healing power is inimical to death. *where all are received*: ironic as well as euphemistic, for the Greek adjective normally registers agreeable hospitality, 18, *LB* 662.

861–73 Interpolated to prepare for Antigone's part in the fabricated 1005–77; cf. also 996–7, and n. on 1055–77. *without disputing*: unlike their brothers. The erotic interest in the girls' femininity (864–5, 871) suggests a later sensibility, of the mid-fourth century, gratuitous here, although *dressed in deep folds* is a Homeric borrowing (see n. on *Pers.* 155). The tone is quite different from the significant concentration on sexuality at *Supp.* 996–1005 (n.).

868–9 *ill-sounding hymn of the Fury ... hateful paean to Hades*: oxymoron and euphemism for a reversal of happy music: cf. e.g. *Ag.* 645 paean to the Furies, 1190 their 'revel', and *LB* 151 paean to the dead; at *Eum.* 331 the Furies sing their own 'hymn'.

873–4 *truly wail*: emphasis strange in English; cf. 919 'truly streaming tears'.

874–1004 The Chorus now divide again into two voices (as briefly at 369–74); cf. n. on 961–1004.

881–3 *single rule*: which Eteocles had (10, 39, 652, etc.) and Polynices wanted (647–8). *reconciled*: the sword was their 'arbitrer', 908, cf. 767 n. [a paraphrase

of 883 invaded the MSS after this word; while many early editors retained it, its deletion has caused the subsequent gap in the line-numbering].

886–7 *Oedipus* . . . *Fury*: 723, 791, 976–7 and n. *potent*: lit. ‘sovereign, mistress, lady’, a form of address to deities (152), dignifies Oedipus’ ‘shade’ at 976, and a Fury also at *Eum.* 951—but there in an optimistic context.

889 *left sides*: unguarded if shields are let drop.

890 *brothers from one womb*: imitated by the fabricator of 1036; cf. 931–4.

896–9 *unspeaking*: the Messenger did not say whether the brothers argued angrily before their duel. There may be an implicit contrast between their silent fight and their *father’s* only too violent *curse* (785–7). *fated . . . to unity of purpose*: fated to their irreconcilable quarrel, they agreed to resolve it through a duel; cf. 933–6. Others understand this ‘unity of purpose’ as the divine working of their common fate (812). [Editors have removed some invasive glosses from these lines, and corrected ‘division’ to *unity* in 899.]

900–2 *Lament*: for the emphatic repetitions of this word cf. *PB* 406–9. *the soil laments for men*: even more strongly at *Persians* 62, 548 and n., 683.

903–5 *successors*: loose in reference, the next rulers of Thebes: see 1005 n. (not the Epigoni, the sons of the defeated Seven, who avenged their fathers upon Thebes: e.g. Euripides, *Suppliants* 1219–26). *death as its end*: a Homeric phrase.

906–10 *equal parts*: death for both, 785–90. *the arbiter*: the sword, 883 n.; paired with *Ares* as ‘the evil divider of their property’ again in 941–5.

911–14 *Struck by iron*: cf. 730 n. *certain shares—one might say*: bleak humour, for the second ‘struck by iron’ alludes to graves dug by it; they ‘share’ *the tombs of their fathers*.

915–21: a typically Aeschylean accumulation of emotive terms. *rending*: only a possible translation [both the preceding and the following line being largely bold conjectural emendation]. The Greek word-root means ‘cleaving apart’ but describes ‘lacerating’ grief in Homer; *rending* is similarly uncertain in 918. There may be play too on the iron-struck division of the inheritance, 911–12. *truly streaming tears*: 873 n.

922–5 *One may say, etc.*: a certain caution here, or just understatement? The idiom is slightly different from ‘one might say’ in 913. *fray*: a Homeric word, only here in Tragedy.

927–8 *mother . . . women . . . parent*: emphatic redundancy, not rare.

931–2 *killing each other*: further insistence on the fratricide, cf. 850, 888–90.

934 *parting*: i.e. separation, but this translation is disputed. Lit. ‘cutting-apart’, in which it is difficult not to hear an echo of ‘dividing their inheritance with the sword’, 816–17, etc.

941–5: repeating much of 727–30 and 906–10. *Harsh... harsh*: a key word, sometimes translated as ‘bitter’, for the curse and its effects, e.g. 787, 881... *sea-borne*: worked iron imported across the Black Sea and the Aegean; see on 727–30. *leapt from fire*: cf. 207 ‘born in the fire’, of heated horse-bits. *Ares*: see 910 n. In the Greek ‘Ares’ and ‘curse’ are juxtaposed in a sound-play (*Ares* : *aran*).

947–50 *portion*: but of what?—seemingly the property, but the word looks forward to *bottomless wealth*, the eternal ‘riches’ of the grave; for the irony, see 731–3; there is a comparable conceit at Ag. 871–2. Greek ‘wealth’ here (*ploutos*) half-conceals the name of the underworld god Pluto, in black irony: cf. n. on PB 806.

951 *crowned... with... sorrows*: a metaphor of grief also at LB 150.

957–60 *Ruin*: not personified at 687 (n.), though in this same context. *the demon*: 811–13 n. *ceased*: the ‘ceasing’ of Ruin is prayed for at the end of LB, when the matricidal Orestes’ persecution by the Furies begins (1075–6, cf. Ag. 1479).

961–1004 Mesode 2 and stanza-pair 6 are a climax of unrestrained but rhythmic grief, with many phrases and sentences of corresponding length both within and across the stanzas; cf. 822–1004 n., and Introd. 3.3 p. lxii, on the *kommos*. The two semi-choruses deal for the most part each with one brother’s fate, whereas in 874–960 they sang of them jointly; but while commending Eteocles’ preservation of the city (esp. 981), they sympathize with Polynices despite his attack on it (esp. 980). [The MSS are often greatly at variance, and there are a number of corruptions where sure correction is impossible, even if the general sense seems clear, in particular 973–4, 984–5, 1000–4; and most editors interchange 983 and 993. I follow West’s edited text throughout, except for two places (973, 984) noted in the Textual Appendix, p. 272. Lines 960–1004 are attributed in part to the brothers’ sisters Antigone and Ismene in many MSS (but not in the principal MS, which indicates only change of voice parts); such attributions were almost certainly associated with the fabrication of 861–74, 996–7, and 1005–77: see on 822–1004.]

964 *Let lament come*: self-incitement to grief interrupts constant restatement of its cause; in a *kommos* also e.g. *Pers.* 941–7.

976–7 = 987–8 *potent shade of Oedipus*: a ‘shadow’ among the dead, but powerful still, like Darius in *Persians*, whose Ghost is summoned up (621, 630, etc.), and Agamemnon in *Libation Bearers* (355–9; he is the object of gifts and prayers both placating him, 23, 44, etc., and exhorting his vengeance, 124 ff., 315 ff.). For the adjective *potent* see the n. on 887. Oedipus is once again equated with his ‘black’ Curse and the Fury, as in 832–3. *black Fury*: clad in black (*Eum.* 52, 370), as in ‘black storm’ 699 above; she is ‘black’ also as the daughter of Night, *Eum.* 745.

985 *triple (blows)*: probably meaning just ‘extreme’, like the ‘triple’ wave at 760.

989–91 *at the end of your march: ... when you came back to your city*: as Polynices boasted on his shield, 647 n.

995 [The interpolator of 861–74 here inserted two lines for Antigone and Ismene, 996 ‘But above all for *me*’, 997 ‘And beyond that for *me*’.]

998 [After this line an interpolator inserted ‘Eteocles the ruler’, defining *lord*.]

1001 *ruinous folly*: cf. 687 n.

1003–4 *honour ... greatest*: the Chorus mean that Eteocles, as actual king, and Polynices, as a king’s son, deserve the full honour of burial among the royal tombs; but they allow that the dead Oedipus will find it *hurtful* to have the sons he cursed *lie beside* him.

1005–77: 861–74, and perhaps 996–7 were fabricated in association with this whole false play-ending (on which see Introd. 2.2. p. xxxv). 862 names Antigone and Ismene as entering, but they go unmentioned in the genuine scenes of lament which follow 874. In fact only Antigone speaks here, at 1026–52, and is neither addressed by name, nor names herself; nor is Ismene mentioned; see also the s.d. on 1053 and 1077 (n.). Much of 1007–24 resembles Sophocles, *Antigone* 194–210 and Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 1628–34, both of which were later than *Seven*, so that some suppose the fabricator’s dependence upon those places.

1005 *present and past decisions*: the apparent sense, the Herald beginning with a solemn statement of his office which reflects the formulae of Athenian democratic consultation and decree; his conclusion is not less formal, 1025; the words are translated less well as ‘the wishes and decisions’. In the myth generally, control of Thebes after Eteocles’ death passed to Creon, brother of Oedipus’ wife and mother Jocasta: 473–4 n. *people’s counsellors*: in 1025 they are ‘the authorities’.

1009 (*death*) *within the city*: very flat, unless it anticipates the contrast with Polynices the invader (1019) whose corpse is to be thrown ‘outside’ (1014) [so ‘in the gates’ is conjectured, the place where both brothers died (958) or ‘(chose death) well for the city’, anticipating 1011].

1010 *pure... towards its ancestral temples*: unlike Polynices (1016–18), who was accused of intending to ransack them, 582–3.

1011 *where it is honourable for the young to die*: in the front line, Homer, *Iliad* 12.315 ff., Tyrtaeus 10.1–2, 27–31 (a seventh century martial poet). Cf. Eteocles’ own words at 683–5, 717.

1014 *to be thrown outside*: outside inhabited or managed land, or perhaps over the border, a regular penalty for executed traitors (in historical times, e.g. Thucydides 1.126.12). *for dogs to seize upon ... (1020) funeral from birds of the air*: the consequence of exposing a corpse, cf. 1035–7, *Supp.* 800–1; a Homeric picture, *Iliad* 1.4, etc.

1015 and 1018–19: lines composed on the basis of 582–3.

1017 *even in death he shall keep, etc.*: undying punishment for the criminal dead, *Supp.* 228–9, *Eum.* 174–5; cf. 682 and n.

1021 *honour’s reward*: sardonic, like 1047–8; the Greek word here for ‘reward’ normally means ‘penalty’, as at *Pers.* 823.

1022–3 These lines are so convincingly Aeschylean in diction and feel that one is tempted to think that the fabricator drew them from another play now lost. *hands to work, etc.*: an interdict upon Antigone (who in Sophocles, *Antigone* 384–439 has achieved at least token burial for Polynices; see her 1040 here).

1024 *carried out from home*: for funeral, *LB* 9, 430.

1028–30 *give... given* would be acceptable emphasis, but the effect is weakened when they follow *giving* so closely. *my own brother... defying the city’s rule*: similarly Antigone in Sophocles’ play, 44–6, 450–6.

1031 *a powerful thing*: this phrase at *PB* 39, of kinship.

1033–4 *unwilling*: factually incorrect (1015 ff.), but the antithesis is automatic rhetoric; cf. 427–8. *my soul*: an elevated form of self-address, very rare in Tragedy except in Euripides (whom Aristophanes mocked for it, e.g. *Acharnians* 450).

1035 (*a line missing*): such as ‘neither dogs nor birds’ (1014, 1020)?

1036 *let no one think of that!*: cf. 1040. She repeats and condemns the Herald's 1005, 1008, and esp. 1025.

1037–9 *His funeral . . . a woman*: the translation disguises clumsy and possibly corrupt Greek, and there is no grammatical object for *carrying*, so that 'things' are vaguely 'what is needed for the funeral' [editors tinker with these problems].

1042–53 This brief stichomythic exchange is quite stylish and effective—but not in Aeschylus' typical manner.

1045 *Be harsh!*: perhaps the meaning intended, but the usage of the verb is unparalleled.

1047–8 The text is 1047 is insecure, so that 1048 is hard to interpret except as sardonic: the Herald sees Polynices' 'honour' as the gods' punishment: 1021 n. [*Certainly, if*: the two words are conjectural. The MSS have approximately 'He has not already had full honour from the gods', in which 'already' is false to Greek idiom and the whole sentiment incongruous.]

1051 *Strife*: personified by some editors at 726, by almost all at Ag. 698, 1461, LB 471; there in the *Oresteia*, as here, it represents the fatal conflicts within the family.

1055 *Spirits of Death, you Furies*: equated at Hesiod, *Theogony* 217. The Furies are 'Fates' because persecution by them is fated and inevitable; these identities merge at PB 516; cf. LB 306, *Eum.* 961. For their relentless persecution of criminal families see *Eum.* 354–5.

1056 *root and branch*: probably an imitation of 71.

1060 [*anger*: a conjectural replacement for the unapt MSS 'fear']

1065 *who could believe this?*: translation as 'Who would consent to this?' is possible but rather against idiom; it nevertheless seems to fit the responses in 1069–71.

1071–3 *any city approves what is right differently at times*: Chorus A defies the city's judgement upon Polynices (while allowing it to be right), Chorus B approves it for Eteocles.

1076–7 *swamping by a wave*: seemingly the fabricator of 1055–77 wished to end the play with its opening and repeated metaphor, the ship of state endangered.

1077 *s.d.*: Movement of the two groups in diverging processions may have begun during the last exchange of 1066–77; their parting illustrates the conflict of sympathies and purpose.

Textual Appendix

A list of conjectural readings taken from West's *apparatus* to replace words which he retains in his edited text but marks as corrupt, and of other differences. The line-numbers are those of the Greek text.

SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

- 137 φύτωρ (Weil) ἐπώνυμον Κάδμου (MS M): †φεῦ φεῦ ἐπώνυμον
Κάδμου†
- 162 παῖ Διὸς (Westphal) ὄθεν (Van den Bergh): †καὶ Διόθεν†
- 221–2 κάκ στρατοῦ δαπτομέναν Hutchinson after Prien: †στράτευμ’
ἀπτόμενον†
- 364 τλαμόνως <φέρουσιν> εὐνὰν {αἰχμάλωτον} West (*apparatus*;
translated approximately): †τλήμονες εὐνὰν αἰχμάλωτον†
- 435 φωτὶ πέμπε, editors: φωτί, πέμπε Pauw
- 576 προσθροῶν (Francken) ὁμόσπορον (Burgess): †πρὸς μόραν ἀδελφείον†
- 695 μέλαιν’ Weil: †τελεῖ†
- 785 the translation ignores †ἀραίας†
- 792 ἐγγενῶν West (*apparatus*): †μητέρων†
- 824 <μεμέλησθε> West (*apparatus*): only loss of wording is marked in his
text
- 826 †σωτήρι† approximately translated
- 849 δίδυμα γοερά Brown: δίδυμ’ †ἀνορέα†

973 the translation ignores †τοίων†

984 δύστονα κήδε' (MSS) ὁμαίμονα (Haupt): †δύστονα κήδε'
ὁμώνυμα†